The New Criterion

February 1994

A monthly review *edited by Hilton Kramer*

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The New Criterion *February 1994*

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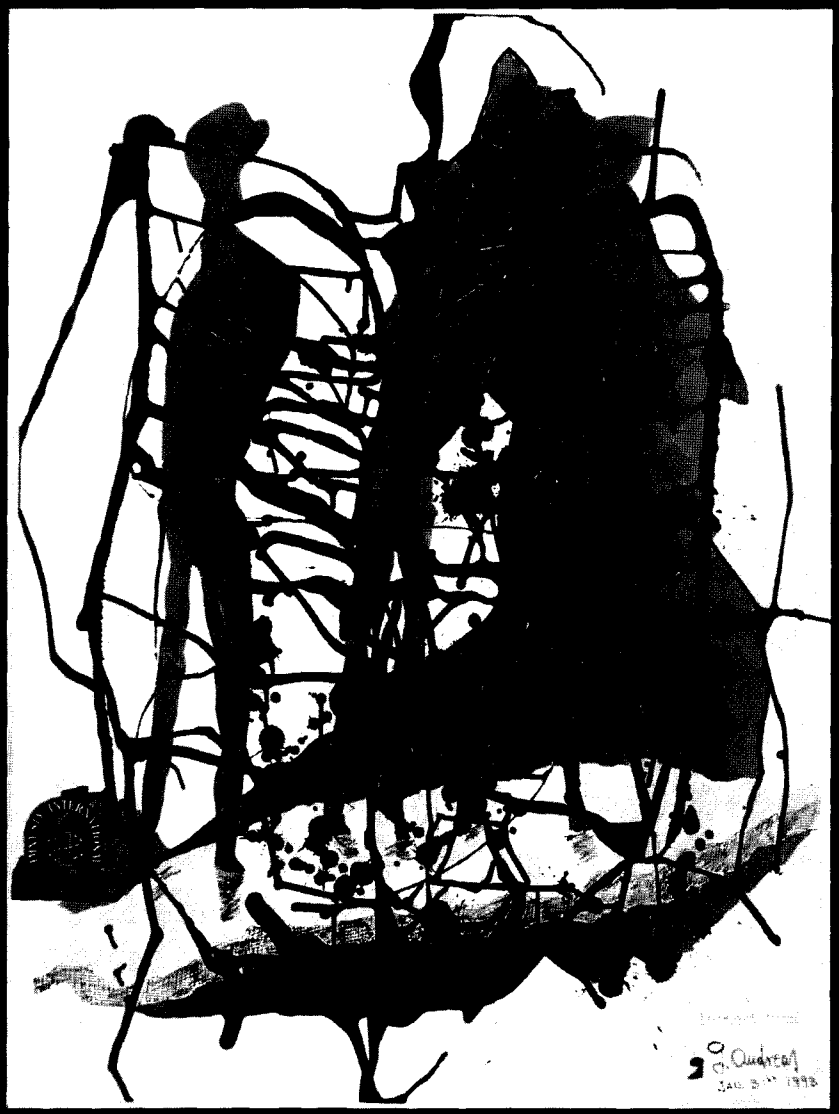

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Notes & Comments: February 1994

The death of a classical station

In this period of cultural decline, it is a special sadness when a classical radio station dies and is replaced by a station catering to rock or other popular programming. This is what happened in December to WNCN-FM, a long-time New York metropolitan-area classical station. On barely twelve hours' public notice, it was transformed into Q-104.3, or what the press release called a "Pure Rock radio station, featuring the music of Aerosmith, AC/DC, Pearl Jam, Stone Temple Pilots, Led Zeppelin and much more." For GAF Broadcasting, WNCN's owner, the conversion was the triumphant climax of a campaign that began in the late 1980s with the progressive and calculated destruction of the station's serious programming. Vocal music was cut out; all music written after World War I was proscribed, as was all "difficult" music of whatever period; regular taped live orchestral broadcasts were limited to the Chicago Symphony; the announcers adopted a trivializing, bantering tone; *Keynote*, the widely read and influential WNCN monthly program magazine, was eliminated. Everywhere the appeal was to the young, as always assumed to be frivolous and ignorant.

And so when WNCN finally died, there were few music-loving listeners left to mourn. In GAF's remarkably meretricious and smug press release, the death was presented as something inevitable: "The change was brought on by extensive local market research, indicating a tremendous unserved need in the marketplace. With two classical stations remaining in New York, the classical audience will continue to be well served." One need look no further than this press release to find the rationale for putting yet another rock station on the air: "*We are also taking this opportunity to build a radio station that entirely supports advertiser and consumer needs.* GAF will invest heavily in developing an organization that operates with customer needs in mind. Our philosophy is to focus on *your success*." (All italics in the original.)

What has been lost, then, by the long illness and sudden death of WNCN? Not, surely, a great classical station, for WNCN was, at the end, nothing like that. What was lost in this whole process was the possibility of fulfilling the four vital functions of the broadcasting of great music: playing records that give musical pleasure and enlightenment, especially to those who cannot afford to buy large numbers of discs; providing information about the compositions and performances broadcast, to aid listeners in their purchases of records; providing thoughtful commentary, to educate listeners; and, perhaps most important, airing live concerts and operas, to give listeners a conspectus of contemporary developments in the world of performance

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and competition. Even in the best of times, these four functions have proved difficult to fulfill, but in a period like the present, with the standards and ideals of high culture under fire from every corner, it is more necessary than ever before that classical stations dedicate themselves to their fulfillment.

Only words

Some call it left-wing factionalism. "Fatuousness" may be a more accurate name. In the battle between the radical feminist Catharine MacKinnon and the left-wing journalist Carlin Romano there are no winners, only amused onlookers. Readers of *The New Criterion* will remember Catharine A. MacKinnon. We reviewed her new book, *Only Words*, in our October issue, under the headline "Sex in the Twilight Zone." Among the many fruity things that Professor MacKinnon propounds in *Only Words* is the idea that pornography is a form of rape and should be punished as such. "To say it is to do it," she assures readers, "and to do it is to say it." It turns out now that for Professor MacKinnon and her acolytes, pornography is not the only form of expression that is rape. Negative reviews of her book are, too.

Mr. Romano discovered this when he attacked *Only Words* in that weekly bible of left-wing sentiment, *The Nation*, last fall. His main point—that Professor MacKinnon's identification of pornography with rape rested on a profound and debilitating confusion of speech and action—was well taken and had, in fact, already been made by many other reviewers. But Mr. Romano is known as much for viciousness as for opportunism. He chose to begin his review with true Romanian tastelessness: "Suppose I decide to rape Catharine MacKinnon before reading her book. Because I'm uncertain whether she understands the difference between being raped and being exposed to pornography, I consider it necessary research." He then explains that he decides against the rape because "People simply won't understand." Nonetheless, he imagines the act and discovers that his fantasy "significantly influences what I write." Mr. Romano spins out the conceit a bit longer. He invents another critic, Dworkin Hentoff—a conflation of the legal scholar Ronald Dworkin and the free-speech advocate Nat Hentoff—who reads his piece and actually does rape Professor MacKinnon before reviewing her book for *The New York Review of Books*. Eventually both Mr. Romano and "Dworkin Hentoff" are jailed for rape.

The response to this performance was swift, hysterical, enlightening. Predictably, Professor MacKinnon denounced the review as a form of "public rape." It seems that everything Professor MacKinnon dislikes is rape of one sort or another. Curiously, though, she also dismissed Mr. Romano's effort as "irrelevant." (Is rape, then, "irrelevant"?) Jeffrey M. Masson, Professor MacKinnon's betrothed, shot off an angry letter—which has since been widely circulated—that described the review as a "wild, confused, vicious, personal diatribe against a woman of unbelievable depth and compassion." Emphasis, presumably, on "unbelievable."

Piquant incidental detail: Mr. Masson, a psychoanalyst who once claimed to have slept with a thousand women, recently confided that living with Catharine MacKinnon was "like living with God." Mr. Masson said that he wasn't threatening Mr. Romano, you understand, though he did write that "I want you to know, if there is ever anything I can do to hurt your career, I will do it. If it hurts you personally." Poor Carlin Romano! His entire career had been one long effort to be on the politically correct side of every issue, and now this ghastly misstep.

Many people wanted in on the fight. The letters columns of *The Nation* swelled with

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verbiage. Perhaps the most extraordinary missive came from the Harvard University Press, Professor MacKinnon's publishers. Signed by Lindsay Waters, her editor, and six other members of the Press, the letter accused Mr. Romano of using "rape as a tool for the conduct of criticism." Note the MacKinnonite strategy: you don't like something; ergo, it must be a form of "rape." And since when have publishers whined in print when their authors receive bad reviews? We hope this is not the beginning of a trend. Second incidental detail: Mr. Waters is a prominent champion of the late Paul de Man, notable deconstructionist and Nazi sympathizer. It is a prime tenet of deconstruction that language is so radically ambiguous that the meaning of "texts" is always unstable and up for grabs. Yet Mr. Waters seemed to have no trouble understanding Carlin Romano's review. Has he changed his mind about deconstruction, or is he merely making an exception in this case?

Articles about the Romano–MacKinnon spat have appeared in *The Washington Post* and many other newspapers. *The Sunday Telegraph* of London even had a brief piece on the subject. The moral? Perhaps that the Left, given the opportunity, will inevitably devour its own. The one thing we can say with certainty is that Mr. Romano and Professor MacKinnon richly deserve each other.

Forthcoming in *The New Criterion:*

The poetry of Geoffrey Hill *by William Logan*
Harriet Beecher Stowe *by Marc M. Arkin*
Degas & his landscapes *by Karen Wilkin*
Anna Akhmatova *by John Simon*
The legacy of John Maynard Keynes *by David Frum*
Auguste Rodin: life & art *by William Tucker*
Tennyson today *by Michael Glover*
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Old "Times" & new

by Hilton Kramer

The melancholy fate that has lately overtaken *The New York Times*—its militant embrace of political correctness and its surrender to multiculturalist doctrine combined with a general "dumbing down" of its news coverage and the elevation of features on lifestyle, fashion, and pop culture to a priority status—has suddenly and unexpectedly become the subject of a good deal of critical debate and journalistic controversy.[1] The newspaper long regarded as pre-eminent in the annals of American journalism has now achieved, in what many observers believe to be the twilight of the paper's august history, the dubious distinction of becoming a "story" that on many days of the year is far more interesting, and far more indicative of the malaise afflicting American cultural life, than a large number of the trivial events and fatuous opinions regularly reported in its pages. The *Times* has always had its critics, of course—and they haven't always been wrong, either—but what we are witnessing today is something different. There is a growing sense—among journalists, first of all, but also among the middle-class professionals in many fields who still constitute the *Times*'s core readership—that we are seeing the fall of a great journalistic institution.

This is not to say that the current troubles at the *Times* are without precedent. The *Times* has often shown itself to have a weakness for the kind of "progressive" causes of which political correctness and multiculturalism are but the most recent manifestations. The paper's ineptitudes in the realm of cultural journalism have likewise had a long, inglorious history. There are no doubt many reasons that, given the alternatives, the *Times* has chosen at particular moments of its history to be "progressive" on some issues and benighted on others. But one reason, I think, comprehends all the others, and that is the paper's relation to the ethos of liberalism. The *Times* has long been the voice of established liberal opinion in this country, and as American liberalism has altered its course in this century, the *Times* has generally hastened to conform to whatever doctrine or desiderata established opinion has defined as liberal orthodoxy. In my view, anyway, neither the old *Times* nor the new can be fully understood in isolation from the paper's abject attachment to liberal piety, for the changes that have occurred in the *Times*—not only in its politics but in its whole outlook on life—are a mirrorlike reflection of the changes that have occurred in liberalism itself and the fierce conflicts which those changes have generated in the liberal establishment.

Thus, in the 1930s, when liberals went to

1 See, among much else, the special issue of *National Review* devoted to "The Decline of American Journalism" (June 21, 1993) and William McGowan's article "The Other Side of the Rainbow" in the *Columbia Journalism Review* (November/December 1993).

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such extraordinary lengths to accommodate the mendacities of Stalin and his international propaganda network, the *Times* was pleased to employ Walter Duranty as its chief Moscow correspondent. Duranty, a Pulitzer Prize–winning journalist of whom Joseph Alsop once wrote that "lying was his stock in trade," provided *Times* readers with a comprehensive misrepresentation of the major events of the time in the Soviet Union—the massive famine caused by Stalin's collectivization program, the infamous Moscow Trials, and the campaign of terror, torture, imprisonment, and death that in the end cost more lives than Hitler's holocaust.[2] Similarly, when liberals chose not to acknowledge Stalin's role in subverting the cause of the Republican government in the Spanish Civil War, the *Times* allowed Herbert Matthews to misrepresent the role of the Communists in that fateful conflict. It repeated the favor—to Matthews and the Communists, that is, not its own readers—when, in the late 1950s, the paper allowed Matthews, who was by then a member of the *Times*'s editorial board, to misrepresent the nature of Fidel Castro's revolution in Cuba. This, too, was part of the liberal orthodoxy of the time. Because the Cold War had by then converted many liberals to the anti-Communist cause, however, Castro's revolution had to be depicted as a non-Marxist insurgency. Matthews obliged.

It was inevitable that the Cold War would alter liberal opinion about Communism and the Soviet Union, and when it did, the *Times* just as inevitably followed respectable liberal opinion in its support of the West against Soviet expansionism abroad and the Kremlin's policy of repression against its own citizens and those of the foreign territories under its control. This is the *New York Times* that many older readers remember today. Yet even in the heyday of the Cold War, there were always certain powers at the *Times*—Harrison Salisbury, most conspicuously—who remained loyal to the old, pre–Cold War liberal beliefs, which, if not openly pro-Communist, were certainly anti-anti-Communist in all political matters, foreign and domestic. When I joined the *Times* as art news editor in 1965, there were still a good many highly respected editors and writers playing major roles in the newsroom and on the editorial board who regarded Alger Hiss as a victim of a "witch hunt" and firmly believed the Cold War to be the malign invention of Joe McCarthy, John Foster Dulles, and the House Un-American Activities Committee. A few had once been members of the Communist Party, but most were the kind of fellow-traveling liberals whose faith in the unblemished virtues of the political Left had remained inviolate through all the decades of Soviet terror and aggression.

By the late Sixties, of course, with the war raging in Vietnam, the anti-war movement heating up at home, and the incendiary ideologies of the counterculture penetrating the media and altering what was now called "lifestyle," a new day had dawned for this militant liberal faction at the *Times*. The last vestiges of Cold War anti-Communism were swept aside—not so much eradicated as moved to the margin—in favor of what began as a new tolerance for the politics and culture of the radical Left and then rapidly developed into a warm embrace of its fundamental beliefs. In this development, too, the *Times* was following where established liberal opinion led, and where it led was straight into a categorical revision of liberalism itself. Thenceforth liberalism, with the *Times* serving as its trusted loyal voice, would not only adopt a great many doctrines and practices theretofore considered illiberal and illegitimate, but would also embrace a whole range of cultural and moral attitudes which liberalism had traditionally regarded as antisocial. It was in the crucible of this revisionist, Left-dominated liberalism, with its espousal of a new morality as well as a new politics and a new idea of culture, that the "new" *New York Times* was born.

2 For a complete account of Walter Duranty's contributions to *The New York Times* in the Stalin era, see S. J. Taylor's *Stalin's Apologist: Walter Duranty, "The New York Times"'s Man in Moscow* (Oxford, 1990).

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This historic transformation of the *Times* did not occur overnight, to be sure, and it was not accomplished without a certain amount of resistance from within the *Times* itself. But the pressures, which were economic as well as political and cultural, to conform to what may be called the emancipatory ideologies of revisionist liberalism proved to be too powerful to be resisted —even, it must be said, by those in the top management of the *Times* who clearly understood and personally disapproved of the changes that would inevitably follow upon a surrender to the new journalistic agenda now dictated by the politics and lifestyle philosophies of the Left.

As often happens with liberals, the first surrender took place in the realm of style rather than substance. As John Corry writes in *My "Times": Adventures in the News Trade*,[3] his new book about a journalistic career spent largely at the *Times*, "The *Times* in the Sixties was trying to resist that marriage of news reporting and fiction writer's technique called New Journalism."

> In the great *Times* tradition [Mr. Corry writes], reporters had to be anonymous and objective. New Journalists, though, were neither faceless nor disinterested, nor did they pretend to be. Tom Wolfe was writing in italics, ellipses, and capital letters. Gay Talese was testing interior monologues, re-created scenes, and flashbacks. Page one of the second section of the old *Herald Tribune* was dizzy with New Journalism every night. When the paper folded, its best-known writers decamped to Clay Felker's fledgling *New York* magazine. Now known mostly for restaurant reviews and celebrity appraisals, it was once the advance guard of New Journalism. I remember a piece by Gail Sheehy about a prostitute, "Redpants," a fascinating, beguiling, tough, no-nonsense creature with a lot to tell *New York* readers. Unfortunately, though, she didn't exist. Redpants, as Sheehy and Felker explained lamely later, was a "composite." Sheehy had invented her from bits and pieces, and while any one bit or piece might have been real, their assembly was an act of creation. New Journalism was journalism in name only, and its soul belonged to fiction.

Resistance to the New Journalism proved to be futile, however. "Old-fashioned objectivity had lost its zing," writes Mr. Corry.

> The paper might turn its face from heresies, but heresies crept in through the cracks. Old rewrite men, tired copyreaders, and reporters long stuck on their beats might not be moved, but others were, especially those young and ambitious.

As he readily acknowledges, Mr. Corry was one of them. In *My "Times"* he gives us a very candid account of why he left the *Times* for a stint with Willie Morris's *Harper's*, and of his subsequent disenchantment with the New Journalism.

> I had read Mailer's marvelous "The Steps of the Pentagon." It had taken my breath away.... Mailer had shown how a writer could get in on the action. I did not notice that he described violence no other reporter saw. I paid no attention to the absence of quotation marks around what were supposed to be quotations. There is a passage about soldiers beating an unidentified young woman—"But there was no face there; all we saw were some raw skin and blood"—and rereading it now I am sure Mailer wrote about something that never happened. Yet the new breezes were wafting everywhere then. When the magazine article was published as a hardcover book, it won the Pulitzer Prize for general nonfiction.

We are thus reminded, incidentally, that from Walter Duranty to Norman Mailer to the journalists of the present day, the Pulitzer Prizes have generally gone to the kind of writing that ratifies the orthodox liberal views of the day, however mistaken or malicious they may be. Which no doubt explains why the *Times* has traditionally garnered such a large share of Pulitzers in recent decades.

3 *My "Times": Adventures in the News Trade*, by John Corry; Grosset/Putnam, 256 pages, $24.95.

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By the time Mr. Corry returned to the *Times* after *Harper's* suffered its famous debacle, he had not only been disabused of his illusions about the New Journalism but had become something of an expert about the political baggage it was now carrying into every quarter of the media industry, including the *Times*. "Journalism was another casualty of the Sixties," he writes, and in the course of recounting his own career at the *Times*, which lasted for more than three decades, he describes the losing battles that were fought by A. M. Rosenthal and a few others to keep the politics of Sixties radicalism from swamping the paper and its tradition of straight news reportage. This, for example, is his description of the uproar at the *Times* caused by disputes over its coverage of the violence at the 1968 Democratic Party convention in Chicago in 1968.

> When the cops charged demonstrators and swung nightsticks, were they practicing brutality or only overreacting? When Mayor Daley cheered the cops on, was he blundering or miscalculating? Questions such as these might seem insignificant now, but in the heated soul of Sixties journalism they could lie like burning embers. J. Anthony Lukas, a *Times* reporter in Chicago, opted for "brutality" and "blundering" when he wrote about what had happened. Abe Rosenthal, not yet managing editor, but for all practical purposes the man then running the *Times*, changed "brutality" to "overreaction" and "blundering" to "miscalculation." On learning this, Harrison Salisbury, who was directing *Times* reporters in Chicago, angrily called New York. It wasn't the first time; he and Abe had fought about the coverage all week. "You're taking the guts out of the story," Salisbury charged once again. No, Abe said; he was taking out the "goddamn editorializing."

About Abe Rosenthal, Mr. Corry writes that "the passions of the decade tugged at him, but he had decided to resist," whereas "Salisbury had never met a revolution he didn't like, and he throbbed with excitement in Chicago." Rosenthal went on, of course, to become executive editor of the *Times*, and in that role became a fixed target of the paranoid Left both within the *Times* and outside it. In many respects, as I have reason to know from my own experience at the *Times*, he had earned the enmity of the radicals by holding the line against some of their worst excesses and allowing anti-radical writers like myself to play a greater role on the paper than would otherwise have been permitted.

On the other hand, it has to be understood that Rosenthal himself, however much he genuinely despised the radicals, remained a liberal—an anti-Communist liberal, to be sure, but a liberal all the same, and thus vulnerable, as liberals always are, to the unremitting importunities of the hard Left. He may, for example, have had a bad conscience about hiring Seymour Hersh, another Pulitzer-Prize radical journalist who occupied a very privileged position on the *Times*, but hire him Rosenthal did. It may be, of course, that I have special feelings about Hersh. He tried to get me fired from the paper when, in 1976, I wrote a long piece for the *Times* on "The Black List and the Cold War," which exposed some of the lies about the role of the Communists in Hollywood and the entertainment industry that were then being generated by the movie *The Front*, which starred Woody Allen, and Lillian Hellman's *Scoundrel Time*, and a documentary film about the Hollywood Ten. Everyone now recognizes that *Scoundrel Time* is a tissue of lies, and that indeed Hellman lied about everything, including her own membership in the Communist Party. But at the time *Scoundrel Time* was treated—in the *Times* and in the media generally—as one of the sacred works of the age, and Hellman was everywhere portrayed as a saint, a martyr, and a genius. As my piece for the *Times* had been commissioned by Arthur Gelb and approved by Rosenthal—and also, incidentally, brought letters of praise from, among others, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., and Alfred Kazin (how times and the *Times* have changed!)—Hersh's attempt to get me fired was unavailing. But the fact that he had been hired as a prestige writer for the *Times* is a

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reminder, if one is needed, that the battle between the liberals and the radicals at the *Times* was already being lost to the radicals even before the editorship of the paper passed to Max Frankel. It was Frankel's task, in this regard, to get rid of whatever remnants of resistance to the Left remained after Rosenthal's departure, and this Frankel has done with a ruthless bureaucratic thoroughness that far exceeded anything Rosenthal, despite his reputation for high-handed management, would ever have been capable of.

My "Times" has an interesting story to tell about this, too. One of the best things Abe Rosenthal did in the last years of his tenure as executive editor was to appoint Mr. Corry to review television news programs for the *Times*'s cultural section. Mr. Corry's commission was to apply "journalistic standards" to news programs and documentaries, and he proved to be the perfect writer for this gruesome task—so perfect, in fact, that his candid exposure of what was really going on in television journalism eventually cost him his job.

> I was surprised at how quickly I got into trouble [he writes]. My first Sunday piece suggested that television journalism was not all that it should be. Deep in the piece I said that *60 Minutes* had not proved its case when it accused the World Council of Churches of channeling funds to left-wing African guerrillas. In a guest column in *Newsweek* a few weeks later, Don Hewitt, the executive producer of *60 Minutes*, said I reminded him of a "dog salivating to a bone." He said I should not write about television, because I knew nothing about it.

"In time the complaints from CBS became almost routine," Mr. Corry adds, and it wasn't only the network executives who were complaining.

> One day a friendly secretary slipped me a copy of a letter the columnist Anthony Lewis had sent to a senior *Times* editor. Lewis said that I was using television criticism to express my "political opinions," and that he was writing the letter in protest. Lewis was correct. I was expressing my political opinions, although what bothered him most were the kinds of opinions I expressed.

"I was a conservative in a media culture dominated by liberals," Mr. Corry writes, and he knew it couldn't last. The end came when Max Frankel took over as executive editor.

> Max sent me a note on his second day in office, saying that in my review that morning I had indulged in "impermissible editorializing." A few days later Max passed on a letter he had received from the president of a foundation, imploring him to get rid of me as a critic. At the top of the letter Max had written, "How should I respond to this?" He was sending me a warning, and I knew it. . . . The *Times* was entering a new era, and I was part of an old one, and I knew it was time to get out.

Traditionally, critics on the *Times* were permitted to speak their minds about anything they wished. It was only in the paper's news columns that "editorializing" was prohibited. What is so piquant about Mr. Corry's story is that in Max Frankel's *Times* virtually every column of the paper, and most particularly every so-called news column, is now awash with "impermissible editorializing" on a grand scale. The only difference is that the editorializing is permitted because it conforms to the paper's new code of political correctness. In his note to John Corry, Max Frankel was ingenuously invoking the old liberal code of journalistic disinterestedness in order to clear the decks for the new radical code of political correctness. Had the situation been politically reversed, liberals like Anthony Lewis—and indeed, Max Frankel—would have been heard crying "Censorship!" But the suppression of anti-Left opinion is never regarded by liberal journalists like Lewis, Frankel, and Seymour Hersh as a form of censorship. It is merely the benign enforcement of political enlightenment. In this respect, too, the *Times* is once again following the course of current liberal orthodoxy, with its support of speech

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codes, racial and sexual quotas, and the rest of the politically correct agenda.

The story of how the old *New York Times* was transformed into the radically altered paper we read today is the ostensible subject of another new book about the *Times*—Edwin Diamond's *Behind the "Times."*[4] Mr. Diamond is a former editor of *Newsweek* who now writes a column on the media for *New York* magazine—a member in good standing of what John Corry correctly describes as "a media culture dominated by liberals." He has interviewed a good many people, myself included, who have worked at the *Times*, and has poked around in the *Times*'s files, and he retails a lot of anecdotage that will be new only to readers entirely unacquainted with recent developments at the paper—i.e., Max Frankel's appointment as executive editor, and the emergence of Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, Jr., as publisher—and the many obvious ways in which they have reshaped the journalistic institution that is now in their grip. Good liberal that he is, however, Mr. Diamond cannot really deal with the politics of the story he has set out to tell. He speaks of a "liberal tilt" here and a "rightward turn" there, but the extent to which the top brass at the *Times* today imposes upon its editors and writers a remorseless program of politically correct pieties is never confronted.

Mr. Diamond is not a very good historian of the *Times*, either. He recycles a lot of the gossip about Abe Rosenthal and Max Frankel and Harrison Salisbury and Punch Sulzberger and the young Arthur Sulzberger, Jr., and a good many others. Yet his mind is so completely enclosed by the liberal orthodoxy that constitutes the principal part of his subject that the real meaning of the political drama currently being played out in the "new" *New York Times* completely escapes his attention.

It is typical of Mr. Diamond's myopia that he describes at length the uproar over the long article that John Corry wrote for the *Times* about the Jerzy Kosinski affair—an attempt by the political Left to destroy the reputation of a writer at odds with the pieties of the liberal literary establishment—and not only gets the whole thing wrong but entirely misses the far more significant story of John Corry's embattled career as the *Times*'s nonfiction television critic. (Mr. Corry's account of the Kosinski affair is told in riveting detail, and has the great virtue of being completely accurate.) Mr. Diamond is no better at dealing with the history of *The New York Times Book Review*, to which he devotes a very muddled chapter of his book. He seems never to have heard of John Gross, the former editor of the *Times Literary Supplement* in London who, after a solid year of negotiations, was lured to New York to serve as an editor of the *Book Review* and then worked as a daily book critic on the *Times* before returning to London after a five-year stint. Mr. Diamond seems also to be unacquainted with *The Belles Lettres Papers*, the hilarious satirical novel about the *Book Review* written by Charles Simmons, who served for many years as one of its editors. The most hilarious of his gaffs is to describe John Russell, the Oxford-educated art critic now in his seventies, and every inch an Englishman, as "sixtyish" and "another Harvard man."

Still, though he is insufferably pious about the *Times* and usually gets the essentials of its recent history wrong—he knows the words, so to speak, but is deaf to the ideological music that animates the action—he does, vaguely, sense that something fundamental has gone wrong. Without intending to, Mr. Diamond has written a very dour book about the *Times* and one that is highly skeptical about its future. Unfortunately, the book itself reads more like a padded *Newsweek* cover story than a real book, and like a *Newsweek* cover story, it affects a knowingness that is belied by the ignorance it displays about its subject on every page. If you want to know what it was like to work on the old *Times* and what the new *Times* portends, John Corry's *My "Times"* is the book to read.

4 *Behind the "Times": Inside the New "New York Times,"* by Edwin Diamond; Villard, 437 pages, $24.

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"The Two Cultures" today

by Roger Kimball

It is not a question of annihilating science, but of controlling *it. Science is totally dependent upon philosophical opinions for all of its goals and methods, though it easily forgets this.*
—Friedrich Nietzsche

[T]he more that the results of science are frankly accepted, the more that poetry and eloquence come to be received and studied as what in truth they really are,—the criticism of life by gifted men, alive and active with extraordinary power.
—Matthew Arnold

"The Corridors of Power" and "The Two Cultures": these phrases are essentially what remains of the once towering reputation of Sir Charles Percy Snow, novelist, pundit, and—as his harshest critic, F. R. Leavis, put it—"public relations man" for science. C. P. Snow (1905–1980) was the son of a provincial church organist who rose to public acclaim and a baronetcy through a mixture of geniality, application, and talent—more or less in that order. He was the embodiment of a certain type of educated philistine: bluff, well-meaning, clubbable, so well-rounded as to be practically spherical. In the Thirties, Snow abandoned an incipient scientific career in order to devote himself to writing. He published his first novel, a whodunit called *Death Under Sail*, in 1932. During the war, Snow's technical background helped win him the important post of overseeing recruitment for Britain's scientific research (hence his acquaintance with "the corridors of power"). And the novels kept appearing. By the Fifties, Snow's novel sequence *Strangers and Brothers* was occasionally compared to *A la recherche du temps perdu*. Today, the word that seems most often used to describe his novels—on the rare occasions that they *are* described—is "inert." In a generous moment, Edmund Wilson defended Snow but anticipated the judgment of history in finding his novels "almost completely unreadable." "The corridors of power" furnished the title for one of Snow's novels; it is all that is left of the work. Things are a little different with "the two cultures." The phrase has lived on as a vague popular shorthand for the rift—a matter of incomprehension tinged with hostility—that has grown up between scientists and literary intellectuals in the modern world. Lack of precision has been part of its appeal: to speak of "the two cultures" is to convey regret, censure, and—since one is bold enough to name and appreciate a presumably unfortunate circumstance—superiority all at once.

Snow first used the famous phrase in 1956 as the title for an article in *The New Statesman*. The article provided the germ for his 1959 Rede Lecture at Cambridge University, *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution*,[1]

1 *The Two Cultures* was recently reissued by Cambridge University Press, with a new introduction by Stefan Collini (107 pages, $9.95 paper). This edition also includes Snow's essay "A Second Look," his "afterthoughts" on the two-cultures controversy.

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which was subsequently printed in *Encounter* magazine in two installments. As soon as it appeared, the brief, avuncular work—in book form it fits comfortably into fewer than sixty printed pages and is full of men who "muck in as colleagues," etc.—became a sensation on both sides of the Atlantic. The edition I have was published in 1961; by then it was already in its seventh printing. Its fame got an additional boost a year later when the critic F. R. Leavis published his attack on *The Two Cultures* in *The Spectator*. Originally delivered as the Downing Lecture at Cambridge, "Two Cultures? The Significance of C. P. Snow" is a devastating rhetorical fusillade. It's not just that no two stones of Snow's argument are left standing: each and every pebble is pulverized, the fields are salted, and the entire population is sold into slavery. Leavis spoke of "the preposterous and menacing absurdity of C. P. Snow's consecrated public standing," heaped derision on his "embarrassing vulgarity of style," his "panoptic pseudo-categories," his "complete ignorance" of history, literature, the history of civilization, and the human significance of the Industrial Revolution. "Snow is, of course, a—no, I can't say that; he isn't: Snow thinks of himself as a novelist," Leavis thundered, but in fact "his incapacity as a novelist is . . . total": "as a novelist he doesn't exist; he doesn't begin to exist. He can't be said to know what a novel is." It gets worse. Snow is "utterly without a glimmer of what creative literature is, or why it matters." "[N]ot only is he not a genius," Leavis concluded; "he is intellectually as undistinguished as it is possible to be."

Literary London was stunned and outraged by Leavis's performance (which was something of an official swan song, since he retired from teaching that year). A certain degree of rhetorical *politesse* still marked British literary journalism; Leavis had been the opposite of polite. In the weeks that followed, *The Spectator* printed more than thirty irate letters, many from eminent personages, most of them siding firmly with Snow. It was an extraordinary outpouring. One correspondent deplored Leavis's "insincerity, incapacity and envy." Lord Boothby, claiming that there was "not a single constructive thought in his lecture," spoke of Leavis's "reptilian venom." Stephen Toulmin wrote that the lecture was "an insult to the audience and to Snow himself." Other indignant commentators dismissed Leavis's lecture as "ludicrously overdone," "a demonstration of ill-mannered, self-centered and destructive behaviour," or, more simply, "bemused drivelling." The extreme reaction was partly a response to Leavis's own extremity: Lionel Trilling, reflecting on the controversy in *Commentary*, summed it up when he spoke of the "unexampled ferocity" and "bad manners" of Leavis's attack. In fact, Trilling agreed with much that Leavis had to say; but he could not abide the scorched-earth rhetoric: "it is," he wrote, "a bad tone, an impermissible tone." Perhaps so. But in the English response there was also a large element of snobbery: by 1960 Sir Charles was, well, Sir Charles: a member of the Athenaeum, a reviewer for *The New Statesman*, someone whom one *knew*. Thus Dame Edith Sitwell: "Dr. Leavis only attacked Charles because he is famous and writes good English." *Charles*, indeed.

The ruffled feathers of London's intellectual elite make for an amusing footnote to the cultural history of the period. But the questions raised by *The Two Cultures*—and by Leavis's searching criticisms of Snow's position—are something more serious. It is not simply that the gulf between scientists and literary intellectuals (and the general public, too, of course) has grown wider as science has become ever more specialized and complex. Because of the extremely technical nature of contemporary scientific discourse—think, for example, of its deep reliance on abstruse mathematical notation—that gulf is unbridgeable and will only widen as knowledge progresses. The more pressing issue concerns the fate of culture in a world increasingly determined by science and technology. Leavis described C. P. Snow as a "portent" of our civilization because, in his

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view, Snow's argument epitomized modern society's tendency to trivialize culture by reducing it to a form of diversion or entertainment. For him, it was not surprising that *The Two Cultures* so captured the public imagination: it did so precisely because it pandered to the debased notion of culture championed by established taste. This year marks the thirty-fifth anniversary of Snow's essay. As we look around the cultural landscape today, we see the debris of a civilization seemingly bent on cultural suicide: the triumph of pop culture in nearly every sphere of artistic endeavor, the glorification of mindless sensationalism, the attack on the very idea of permanent cultural achievement—in the West, anyway, the final years of the twentieth century are years of unprecedented material wealth coupled with profound cultural and intellectual degradation. C. P. Snow is hardly to blame for all this. He is merely a canary in the mine. But as such—as a symptom—he still has much to tell us.

Perhaps the first thing that one notices about *The Two Cultures* is its tone, which vacillates wildly between the cozily anecdotal and the apocalyptic. On the one hand, we find Snow busy meeting the physicist "W. L. Bragg in the buffet on Kettering station on a very cold morning in 1939." Without the narrative prop of High Table dinner conversation at Cambridge, Snow would be lost. On the other hand, he insists that the problem he has outlined is a "problem of the entire West." "This is," Snow writes toward the end of his lecture, "one of the situations where the worst crime is innocence." In some "afterthoughts" on the two-cultures controversy that he published in *Encounter* in 1960, Snow refers solemnly to his lecture as a "call to action."

But what, exactly, is the problem? And what actions does Snow recommend we take? At one moment it's nothing much; the next it's everything and more. There is that "gulf of mutual incomprehension" between scientists and "literary intellectuals," of course. But it soon turns out that there are also the "three menaces" of nuclear war, overpopulation, and the "gap" between rich and poor nations. (There are many gulfs, gaps, and chasms in *The Two Cultures*; it sometimes seems that Snow's entire argument has fallen into one of of them.) On one page the problem is reforming the schools so that "English and American children get a reasonable education." Well, OK. But a few pages later the problem is mobilizing Western resources to industrialize India. And Africa. And Southeast Asia. And Latin America. And the Middle East—all in order to forestall widespread starvation, revolution, and anarchy. Snow envisions tens of thousands of engineers from Europe and North America volunteering "at least ten years out of their lives" to bring the "scientific revolution" to the underdeveloped parts of the world. Reality check: in Snow's mind, the Soviet Union was way ahead of the West in dealing with these vast imponderables. This is, he says, partly because the Russians have a "passionate belief in education." But it is also because they have a "deeper insight into the scientific revolution than we have, or than the Americans have." That explains why they managed their own economy so brilliantly, you see.

If all this seems like a terrible muddle, it is. In truth, there are three sorts of problems in *The Two Cultures*: trivial, nonexistent, and misunderstood. Some, such as the famous gulf, gap, or chasm between scientists and literary intellectuals, are both trivial and misunderstood. Sure, it would be nice if "literary intellectuals" knew more science. But the gulf, gap, chasm that Snow deplores will never be bridged—from this side of the gulf, at any rate—by anyone lacking a good deal of highly specialized training. And, *pace* Snow, it's not at all clear that the gulf really matters.

As several critics have pointed out, Snow's terminology can be exceedingly slippery. He begins with a dichotomy between the world of literary intellectuals and the world of physical scientists. (And he eschews anything more elaborate: "I have thought a long time about going in for further refinements," Snow writes, "but in the end I have

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decided against it": No wonder the biochemist Michael Yudkin, in a perceptive article on *The Two Cultures*, noted that Snow often seems "more concerned with the number two than the term 'culture.'") But in order to further his gulf-gap-chasm thesis, Snow is soon using "literary intellectual" interchangably with "traditional culture." This fusion yields the observation that there is "an unscientific," even an "anti-scientific" flavor to "the whole 'traditional' culture." What can this mean? Aristotle, Galileo, Copernicus, Descartes, Boyle, Newton, Locke, Kant: are there any more "traditional" representatives of "the whole 'traditional culture'"? There's not much anti-scientific aroma emanating from those quarters.[2] The real burden of Snow's thesis was accurately summed up by Leavis: "there are the two uncommunicating and mutually indifferent cultures, there is the need to bring them together, and there is C. P. Snow, whose place in history is that he has them both, so that we have in him the paradigm of the desired and necessary union."

At the beginning of his lecture, Snow affects a generous even-handedness in his attitude toward scientists and literary intellectuals. There's a bit of criticism for both. If literary types tend to be quite appallingly ignorant of even rudimentary scientific concepts (Snow seems astounded that his writer friends cannot define such basic concepts as mass, acceleration, etc.), then it turns out that many scientists are unacquainted with the novels of Charles Dickens. But this show of even-handedness soon evaporates. The "culture" of science, Snow tells us, "contains a great deal of argument, usually much more rigorous, and almost always at a higher conceptual level, than the literary persons' arguments." Literary intellectuals are "natural Luddites"; scientists "have the future in their bones." This is a formulation that Snow likes enough to repeat: "If the scientists have the future in their bones," he writes, "then the traditional culture responds by wishing the future did not exist." To clinch his argument that literary intellectuals (a.k.a. "the traditional culture") "wish the future did not exist," Snow holds up . . . George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-four*—as if that harrowing admonitory tale could have been written by anyone who did not have a passionate concern for the future!

Snow is especially impatient with the politics of "the traditional culture." He quotes with approval an unnamed "scientist of distinction" who opined that literary intellectual writers tended to be "not only politically silly, but politically wicked. Didn't the influence of all they represent bring Auschwitz that much closer?" In this context, Snow explicitly mentions Yeats, Wyndham Lewis, and Ezra Pound. But his indictment is actually much broader: "nine-tenths" of the great literary figures of the early twentieth century (he specifies the period 1914–1950) are on his reckoning politically suspect. The "culture" of science, on the contrary, is optimistically forward-looking. But not, Snow hastens to add, *shallowly* optimistic. Scientists, too, appreciate

2 Among other things, Snow's lecture illustrates the fact that a mountain of confusion can be built from a grain of truth. For there *is* an ingredient of irrationalism in Western culture that regularly manifests itself in anti-scientific biases of one sort or another. Certain varieties of romanticism belong here, as do many less agreeable phenomena. But Snow, while he dances around this issue—it is what gives his whole "two cultures" thesis a superficial plausibility—never really comes to terms with it. In contemporary academic culture, a widespread suspicion of the achievements of science—often extending to an outright rejection of the idea of factual truth—can be seen in many radical movements and "theories." "Cultural constructivism," deconstruction, radical feminism, and many other fashionable *ist*s and *ism*s are aggressively anti-empirical. Paul R. Gross and Norman Levitt expertly anatomize these disparate phenomena in *Higher Superstition: The Academic Left and Its Quarrels with Science*, forthcoming this spring from the Johns Hopkins University Press. They show that this new hostility to science is part of a more general hostility to Western values and institutions, an anti-Enlightenment hostility that "mocks the idea that . . . a civilization is capable of progressing from ignorance to insight."

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the tragic nature of human life—that each of us "dies alone." But they are wise enough to distinguish, with Snow, between the "individual condition and the social condition" of man. There is, Snow writes, "no reason why, just because the individual condition is tragic, so must the social condition be." The prospect of social improvement (what Snow, echoing a character from *Alice in Wonderland*, picturesquely calls the prospect of "jam tomorrow") is a galvanizing force that allows the individual to transcend, or at least forget, his private destiny.

Snow's argument operates by erasing or ignoring certain fundamental distinctions. He goes to a literary party, discovers that no one (except himself) can explain the second law of thermodynamics, and then concludes triumphantly: "yet I was asking something which is about the equivalent of *Have you read a work of Shakespeare's?*" But, as Leavis notes, "There *is* no scientific equivalent of that question; equations between orders so disparate are meaningless." The second law of thermodynamics is a piece of specialized knowledge, useful or irrelevant depending on the job to be done; the works of Shakespeare provide a window into the soul of humanity: to read them is tantamount to acquiring self-knowledge. Snow seems oblivious to this distinction.[3] A similar confusion is at work in Snow's effort to neutralize individuality by assimilating it to the project of "social hope." That may sound nobly altruistic. But, as Leavis asks, "What *is* the 'social condition' that has nothing to do with the 'individual condition'?"

> What is the "social hope" that transcends, cancels or makes indifferent the inescapable tragic condition of each individual? Where, if not in individuals, is what is hoped for . . . to be located? Or are we to find the reality of life in hoping for other people a kind of felicity about which as proposed for ourselves ("jam," Snow calls it later—we die alone, but there's jam to be had first) we have no illusions?

Leavis here exposes the central philistinism, the deeply *anti*-cultural bias, of Snow's position: the idea that the individual is merely a fungible token, a representative type, whose ultimate value is purely a function of his place in the tapestry of society.

In the end, Snow is a naïve meliorist. For him, a society's material standard of living provides the ultimate, really the only, criterion of "the good life"; science is the means of raising the standard of living, ergo science is the arbiter of value. Culture—literary, artistic culture—is merely a patina or gloss added to the substance of material wealth to make it shine more brightly. It provides us with no moral challenge or insight, because the only serious questions are how to keep increasing and effectively distributing the world's wealth, and these are not questions culture is competent to address. "The upshot" of Snow's argument, Leavis writes, "is that if you insist on the need for any other kind of concern, entailing forethought, action and provision, about the human future—any other kind of misgiving—than that which talks in terms of productivity, material standards of living, hygienic and technological progress, then you are a Luddite."

It is worth pausing at this point to note that Leavis grants Snow's subsidiary argument that improvements in scientific education would be a good thing. Leavis is not "anti-scientific." *Of course* "standards of living, hygienic and technological progress" are important. None of that is at issue. Nor is Leavis in any way suggesting that one should "defy, or try to reverse, the accelerating movement of external civilisation . . . that is determined by advancing technology." Barring a world-extinguishing catastrophe, the progress of science is inexorable. Leavis accepts that. What he denies is that

3 He also seems oblivious of the extent to which the second law of thermodynamics has impressed itself—vividly if not always accurately—upon the imaginations of modern artists, philosophers, and theologians via the concept of entropy: the thought that the universe is relentlessly "winding down" has been deeply (yet also productively) unsettling.

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science is a *moral* resource—he denies, that is to say, that there is any such thing as a "culture" of science. Science tells us how best to do things we have already decided to do, not why we should do them. Its province is the province of *means* not *ends*. That is its glory—and its limitation.

This is something that the editors of *The Spectator* grasped much more clearly than the many correspondents who wrote in to protest about Leavis's essay. One word that is missing from Snow's essay, they note in an unsigned editorial, is "philosophy"—"that effort to impart moral direction that was found in the best nineteenth-century English writers." Chief among "the best nineteenth-century English writers" was Leavis's own model and inspiration, Matthew Arnold. It is one of history's small but delicious coincidences that in 1882, nearly eighty years before C. P. Snow's Rede Lecture, Arnold was chosen for that honor. His Rede lecture—"Literature and Science"—was itself a kind of "two cultures" argument. But his point was essentially the opposite of Snow's. Written in response to T. H. Huxley's insistence that literature should and inevitably would be supplanted by science, Arnold argued that, "so long as human nature is what it is," culture would continue to provide mankind with its fulcrum of moral understanding.

The *tenor* of Arnold's lecture could not have been more different from Leavis's. "The tone of tentative inquiry, which befits a being of dim faculties and bounded knowledge, is the tone I would wish to take," Arnold noted with un-Leavisite modesty. But his argument anticipates Leavis in striking detail. Both are concerned with what Leavis calls "the cultural consequences of the technological revolution." Both argue passionately against the trivialization of culture, against what Arnold dismissed as "a superficial humanism" that is "mainly decorative." And both looked to culture to provide a way of relating, in Arnold's words, the "results of modern science" to "our need for conduct, our need for beauty." This is the crux: that culture is in some deep sense inseparable from *conduct*—from that unscientific but ineluctable question, "How should I live my life?" Leavis's point was the same. The stunning upheavals precipitated by the march of science and technology had rendered culture—the arts and humanities—both more precarious and more precious. Leavis understood that the preservation of culture—not as entertainment or diversion but as a guide to "conduct"—was now more crucial than ever. If mankind was to confront the moral challenges of modern science "in full intelligent possession of its humanity" and maintain "a basic living deference towards that to which, opening as it does into the unknown and itself unmeasurable, we know we belong," then the realm of culture had to be protected from the reductive forces of a crude scientific rationalism.

The contemporary relevance of this argument can hardly be overestimated. We live at a moment when "the results of science" confront us daily with the most extreme moral challenges, from abortion on demand and the prospects of genetic engineering to the more amorphous challenges generated by our society's assumption that *every* problem facing mankind is susceptible to technological intervention and control. In this situation, the temptation to reduce culture to a reservoir of titillating pastimes is all but irresistible. Rock music, "performance art," television, video games (not to mention drugs, violence, and mindless sex): we are everywhere encouraged to think of ourselves as complicated machines for consuming sensations—the more, and more exotic, the better. Culture is no longer an invitation to confront our humanity but a series of opportunities to impoverish it through diversion. We are, as Eliot put it in *Four Quartets*, "distracted from distraction by distraction." C. P. Snow represents the smiling, jovial face of this predicament. Critics like Arnold and Leavis offer us the beginnings of an alternative. Many people objected to the virulence of Leavis's attack on Snow. But given the din of competing voices, it is a wonder that he was heard at all.

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The many lives of Frederick Douglass

by James W. Tuttleton

That we live in a decadent age will seem evident to anyone who has been numbed by the moral horrors that occur on a daily basis, all over this country, and that are reported with a bland reportorial neutrality by all the news media. These horrors—involving open drug-dealing and prostitution, shootings in the schools, fetal abortions, doctor-assisted suicides—evoke hardly more than a shrug. Passivity in the face of such evils is in fact nowadays admired as evidence of "open-mindedness," "compassion," and "tolerance" for differing "values" and "behaviors." In fact, to believe that evil is a reality and to have strong convictions about how to deal with the forms that evil takes in the national life is usually to be dismissed as an absolutist, a crank, and a bigot. Public moralists are a nuisance and we usually do not like to listen to them. I am therefore led to wonder whether, if this were the nineteenth century, we would be capable of recognizing, *as evil*, something so huge and monstrous as the institution of slavery. Probably not.

In any case, such reflections on the ubiquity of evil and the too human readiness to deny it—even when its grotesque visage is mirrored in the lines of one's face—occur to me as a result of rereading the autobiography of Frederick Douglass. This tragic and truly extraordinary black American had the bad fortune to be born a slave, near Tuckahoe Creek, Maryland, in 1818. For most Americans in the early years of the Republic, it was perfectly "natural" that an "inferior race," like the blacks, should be enslaved to the "superior whites." After all, the Founding Fathers, in their constitutional wisdom, had—for all their declarations about born equality—provided the "natural law" of slavery with many American legal and political protections. And these constitutional guarantees to slavery were long supported by many of the other institutions of Northern and Southern society—the Protestant churches, the universities, the press, the "intellectual community," and the vast majority of just plain folks like you and me. Slavery an evil? Hardly. Only insolent blacks and the Northern religious right (Yankee moral cranks) thought so. But in the light of the highest ethical principles, they and a few others had it right.

The author of *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845) was one of those "insolent" blacks whose account of slavery made inescapably plain to many of his contemporaries that this "peculiar institution" was in fact a socially organized manifestation of Evil. While nearly everyone with the capacity of moral reason recognizes this now, few enough did in the 1830s, when Douglass ran away from his owner. But the publication of this autobiography—in conjunction with many other kinds of abolitionist activism by Douglass and others—eventually moved many Northerners and some Southerners to agree with Lincoln's decision to publish the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. The *Narrative*

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is thus a major document in the racial, social, and political history of the nation. Its historical importance aside, however, it is also the best of the American slave autobiographies—a work of extraordinary psychological, moral, and *literary* importance.

How splendid it is, then, to have the *Narrative* available in a newly prepared edition in the Library of America series. And not just this *Narrative* but also Douglass's subsequent autobiographical writings—the volumes *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855) and *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (1881; revised 1892).[1] These autobiographies constitute a remarkable unfolding account of the life of an exceptional black American. The first takes him from slavery in the South to freedom in the North; the second from servile anonymity to worldwide renown as the most powerful black abolitionist orator in the world; and the third autobiography expands these earlier accounts in taking him through the Civil War and the triumph of black emancipation to great personal celebrity, high government office, and international fame—even as America was relapsing into Jim Crow laws, resegregation, and what Mark Twain was to call "The United States of Lyncherdom." Douglass's was a remarkable life. His narrative of that life was likewise remarkable in its moral vision, social judgment, and psychological power.

Born in 1818 the son of Harriet Bailey, Douglass never knew who had fathered him. He was thus named Frederick Bailey. He was rumored to be the son of his mother's master, the white man Aaron Anthony, who worked as the general overseer of the immensely wealthy planter Edward Lloyd, who owned five hundred slaves and thirteen farms in Talbot County, Maryland. Separated from his mother at the end of his first year, Douglass was reared by his grandmother, Betsey Bailey, while his mother was sent back to the fields. Then at the age of six he was removed from his grandmother's cabin and taken to live on the Lloyd plantation on the Wye River. He was befriended by the twenty-year-old white woman Lucretia Anthony Auld, wife of Thomas Auld. She was, quite possibly, whether she knew it or not, his half-sister. In any case, the light-skinned Douglass was made the companion of Daniel Lloyd, the twelve-year-old son of the white master, and had the run of the planter's "Great House." The two boys were inseparable and came to love each other; and Douglass must have fantasized about his likewise being the son of the rich man Edward Lloyd. But no one stepped forward to enlighten Frederick about his father; and when he was seven or eight his mother—who might have told him—died unexpectedly; in all he had seen her, briefly, only four or five times. Shortly afterward, he was told that he was no longer needed for Daniel.

Because he was a favorite of Lucretia Auld, Douglass was sent to Baltimore in 1826 to live with her brother-in-law, Hugh Auld, a ship carpenter, and his wife, Sophia. Now, at age eight, Douglass was to be the companion of the Aulds' infant son, Tommy. Life in Baltimore was much safer than on the plantation; there was more food to eat; Douglass had a bed of his own for the first time; and Sophia Auld's kindness melted him. Life for a slave, however, was never secure. His master, Aaron Anthony, died almost immediately, and his daughter Lucretia, who had taught and protected him, died the next year. Such turning points were often catastrophic for the slaves. Their families were often broken up and individuals were sold and dispersed, sometimes into the deep South, in the cotton states, where agricultural life was much harder. Aaron had in fact sold a number of the boy's relatives to deep South planters. Douglass was inherited by Thomas Auld, Lucretia's widower. At the moment he did not want the boy, but instead of selling him off, Thomas Auld luckily returned young Douglass to the Hugh Aulds in Baltimore.

Douglass remarks in the *Narrative* that soon after he went to live with the kindly

1 *Frederick Douglass: Autobiographies*, edited by Henry Louis Gates, Jr.; The Library of America, 1,126 pages, $35.

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Sophia Auld, she began to teach him the ABCs. But Hugh put his foot down, reprimanding his wife that

> "If you give a nigger an inch, he will take an ell. A nigger should know nothing but to obey his master—to do as he is told to do. Learning would *spoil* the best nigger in the world. Now," said he, "if you teach that nigger [Hugh is here speaking of Douglass] how to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave. He would at once become unmanageable, and of no value to his master. As to himself, it could do him no good, but a great deal of harm. It would make him discontented and unhappy."

These words were a revelation to young Douglass of how the white man had managed to enslave the black. From that moment on, literacy represented for Douglass "the pathway from slavery to freedom"; and, during the next seven years while he lived with the Hugh Aulds, the passion to read and write became all-consuming. Douglass "appropriated" little Tommy's copy books and readers, "borrowed" the Webster's speller, and got white youngsters on the street to show him how the letters were made. He got into a Bible study group at the Bethel A. M. E. church in Baltimore in order to read further, and he bought and devoured a used copy of *The Columbian Orator* (1797), a well-known collection of prize speeches. He memorized long passages from Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Caleb Bingham, and other great orators. Some of the speeches dealt with slavery and emancipation from oppression.

> The reading of these documents enabled me to utter my thoughts, and to meet the arguments brought forward to sustain slavery; but while they relieved me of one difficulty, they brought on another even more painful than the one of which I was relieved. The more I read, the more I was led to abhor and detest my enslavers. I could regard them in no other light than a band of successful robbers, who had left their homes, and gone to Africa, and stolen us from our homes, and in a strange land reduced us to slavery. I loathed them as being the meanest as well as the most wicked of men. As I read and contemplated the subject, behold! that very discontentment which Master Hugh had predicted would follow my learning to read had already come, to torment and sting my soul to unutterable anguish. As I writhed under it, I would at times feel that learning to read had been a curse rather than a blessing. It had given me a view of my wretched condition, without the remedy. It opened my eyes to the horrible pit, but to no ladder upon which to get out. In moments of agony, I envied my fellow-slaves for their stupidity.

This burning self-consciousness of his servile condition ate upon his soul, alienated and embittered him, but what could the child do? From time to time young Douglass had heard sinister things about Northern abolitionists; they piqued his curiosity, and he vowed to learn more about them.

In 1832, at age fourteen, Douglass was summarily returned to his owner, Captain Thomas Auld, who was still living back in Talbot County. This was a disastrous development, inasmuch as Auld was a cruel, cowardly, and inconsistent master who did not care for his slaves or feed them enough. Throughout both the *Narrative* and *My Bondage and My Freedom*, Douglass relentlessly condemned Thomas Auld as an evil, mean-spirited master who was the embodiment of the evil of slavery as such and the incarnation of all irreligion. Here is Douglass on Captain Auld, after Auld's conversion at a Methodist camp meeting:

> I have seen him tie up a lame young woman, and whip her with a heavy cowskin upon her naked shoulders, causing the warm red blood to drip; and, in justification of the bloody deed, he would quote this passage of Scripture—"He that knoweth his master's will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes."
>
> Master would keep this lacerated young woman tied up in this horrid situation four or

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> five hours at a time. I have known him to tie her up early in the morning, and whip her before breakfast; leave her, go to his store, return at dinner, and whip her again, cutting her in the places already made raw with his cruel lash. The secret of master's cruelty toward "Henny" is found in the fact of her being almost helpless.

All slaves were more or less helpless, but Henny's hands had been injured in a horrible fire and she was unable to work fast and efficiently. Pornography was taboo in the nineteenth century, but something like soft porn was allowable in the description of the whipping of these female slaves. The point was twofold. In whipping, these masters were not merely brutal monsters. We are to understand the whippings as an elaborate displacement of the sexual degradation of these vulnerable women slaves, mixed in, as it was, with sadistic sexual impulses. Since Auld's conversion seemed to have made him even more ruthless, Douglass turned against Christianity, became a cold rationalist, and put his seething anger and calculating rationalism to the service of destroying the institution that had enslaved him.

Witnessing such whippings made Douglass "insolent" and obstreperous; he often spoke out of turn and was frequently whipped himself for his troubles. Eventually Auld determined to punish Douglass by renting him out as a field hand to Edward Covey, a well-known local "nigger-breaker." And at Covey's farm, over a period of several months, Douglass was beaten so often that he finally snapped. "Mr. Covey succeeded in breaking me," he wrote:

> I was broken in body, soul, and spirit. My natural elasticity was crushed, my intellect languished, the disposition to read departed, the cheerful spark that lingered about my eye died; the dark night of slavery closed in upon me; and behold a man transformed into a brute!

Douglass ran away, back to Auld's farm, and begged his master to hire him out to another. But Auld refused and ordered Douglass back to Covey's farm.

One of the most interesting passages in the *Narrative* concerns Covey's attempt, three days later, to get revenge by whipping Douglass, and the ensuing fistfight with the sixteen-year-old boy. Douglass by this time had grown tall, muscular, and strong. He had been beaten many times, but this time he did not intend to be whipped again. Covey did not expect a fight and got more than he could handle: Douglass drew blood and bested him. For that the slave might have been killed then or later; he might have been sold downriver to the cotton states. But strangely enough, after being beaten by the boy, Covey left him alone; he growled and threatened but he did not try to whip him again, and the slave rental agreement expired at the end of the year. The effect of the fistfight was that Douglass's self-confidence returned, his spirits rose, and he decided to gain his freedom by escaping. This he finally tried with five other slaves in 1836, but he was betrayed by one of his own and jailed in Easton. Thomas Auld kept him from being lynched by telling the jailers that he was retrieving Douglass in order to sell him to a slaveholder in Alabama. But then, inexplicably, he sent Douglass back to the Hugh Aulds in Baltimore to learn a trade.

The situation of blacks in Baltimore at the time Douglass returned to live there was a confusing matter. Perhaps only 20 percent of the population—some twenty-five thousand people—were black; but of these perhaps three fourths of the blacks were free, having been manumitted by their owners or been born to free parents of color. Blacks therefore came and went without much or any white supervision. A number of the blacks who remained slaves were, like Frederick Douglass, apprenticed out to learn a trade. After serving his apprenticeship as a caulker in a shipyard, Douglass in fact was allowed to hire himself out and to board where he chose, although he was obliged, once a week, to surrender most of his wages to Hugh Auld. Once he had mastered his trade

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and saved enough money, Douglass, in these loosened circumstances, planned his escape. In 1838, at age twenty, he went underground, headed north, evaded the prowling slave-catchers and bounty hunters, and made his way to freedom in New Bedford, Massachusetts.

One might expect that the story of the actual escape would be the centerpiece of the *Narrative*, but in fact Douglass gives it short shrift. We must remember that in 1845, when the autobiography was published, Douglass was still a fugitive vulnerable to arrest at any time and susceptible to a forced return to his Maryland owner. Hence, he did not identify his relatives or masters by name, nor did he disclose his way stations northward on the journey to freedom.[2] In fact, when he arrived in New Bedford, he was traveling under the name of Stanley; but he and his new bride, Anna Murray, set up as the Fred Johnsons. But his local contact was a Nathan Johnson, who told him that there were already too many black Johnsons in New Bedford and that another name would be preferable.

What's in a name? The slave has nothing but his body, his labor, and his name. Some slaves had secret African names, but Douglass did not. He had been born Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey but had himself dropped the middle names. Yet in running away, this slave Fred Bailey had had to renounce his name, his patronymic (or rather matronymic), in order to become *par excellence* an actor, an imposter, and a confidence man all rolled into one. By pulling up stakes, moving to a new location, and changing his identity, this slave had begun to participate in what has always been a very distinctively American *rite d'identité*. Douglass reports that

> I gave Mr. Johnson the privilege of choosing me a name, but told him he must not take from me the name of "Frederick." I must hold on to that, to preserve a sense of my identity. Mr. Johnson had just been reading the "Lady of the Lake," and at once suggested that my name be "Douglass." From that time until now I have been called "Frederick Douglass;" and as I am more widely known by that name than by either of the others, I shall continue to use it as my own.[3]

There is perhaps another reason that this newly named Douglass gave the actual escape such scant treatment in the first two narratives. A close reading of the two prewar autobiographies suggests that Douglass's essential emancipation had in fact already occurred four years earlier, at age sixteen, after that fistfight with Edward Covey, the "nigger-breaker." "This battle with Mr. Covey," Douglass wrote in the *Narrative*,

> was the turning-point in my career as a slave. It rekindled the few expiring embers of freedom, and revived within me a sense of my own manhood. It recalled the departed self-confidence, and inspired me again with a determination to be free. . . . It was a glorious resurrection, from the tomb of slavery, to the heaven of freedom. My long-crushed spirit rose, cowardice departed, bold defiance took its place; and I now resolved that, however long I might remain a slave in form, the day had passed forever when I could be a slave in fact. I did not hesitate to let it be known of me, that the white man who expected to succeed in whipping, must also succeed in killing me.

This is a remarkable redefinition of the meaning of freedom. Here freedom is equated with the mere possession of one's ownmost spirit, with psychological self-

2 Douglass is no more explicit in *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855). The intervening Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 had now turned all officers of the court into slave-catchers and Douglass's situation was even more perilous since his fugitive status was now published. The 1881 *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, written well after Emancipation, gives a fuller account of his escape to freedom.

3 It is not clear whether Nathan Johnson or Douglass added the final *s* to the name of Sir Walter Scott's Lord Douglas.

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confidence, and with autonomous interior selfhood. Freedom is not so much a matter of who controls one's body as who has control of the soul. As such, this definition of liberty is not unlike the Stoicism of the philosopher-slave Epictetus, to whom the imprisoned and enslaved, in many nations, have oft turned for consolation.

Nor is this definition of freedom alien to one strand of Christian thought, which sees us all as slaves to the body, to the appetites, and to perversions of the will. (Under this conviction, St. Paul could counsel patience and obedience to one's masters, in the expectation of eventual heavenly deliverance.) After 1845 Douglass appears to have sensed the extremity of this subjective definition of freedom and so backed off from it in the 1881 *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*. There he writes: "I was a changed being after that fight. I was *nothing* before; *I was a man* now. It . . . inspired me with renewed determination to be a *free man*." He wrote that he was resurrected

> from the dark and pestiferous tomb of slavery, to the heaven of comparative freedom. I was no longer a servile coward, trembling under the frown of a brother worm of the dust, but my long-cowed spirit was roused to an attitude of independence. I had reached the point at which I was *not afraid to die*. This spirit made me a freeman in *fact*, though I still remained a slave in *form*. When a slave cannot be flogged, he is more than half free. He has a domain as broad as his own manly heart to defend, and he is really "a power on earth."

One likes the adjective in "comparative freedom," but it is followed by a recourse to considerations of form and fact and to percentages of liberty that do not add up in my own calculations. Still, the point seems preserved, even in Douglass's final and more florid 1881 figure: the essence of freedom is always a condition of the heart.

Between 1838 and 1841 Douglass supported his family by unskilled labor—sawing wood, shoveling coal, and loading ships. (The white New Bedford shipyard workers would not tolerate a black caulker.) Yet he was now reading *The Liberator*, attending speeches by William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips, and occasionally speaking himself from the pulpit of the local Zion Methodist Church. In 1841, at the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society convention in Nantucket, Douglass was invited to describe his life as a slave. The performance was electrifying and so enthusiastically received that he was hired by the Society to be its general agent and to tour the country—with Garrison, Phillips, Abby Kelley, Stephen S. Foster, Parker Pillsbury, and other radical abolitionists—advocating the nonviolent emancipation of blacks, their civil equality, and their right to live in America (rather than suffering exile to a distant black colony). In 1845, he published the *Narrative* and, because he disclosed his true identity, movement leaders deemed it prudent to send him on a lecture tour to Great Britain, where, during the following two years, he was an immense success.

While abroad, some of his English friends (notably, Anna and Ellen Richardson and John Bright) negotiated with the Aulds to secure his freedom—thus initiating the first of many great public furors over Frederick Douglass. Hugh Auld, who in 1846 had bought Douglass for $100 from his brother, agreed to free Douglass in return for £150. After Douglass secured his freedom in this way there was an immense outcry, many purists arguing that the English anti-slavery radicals had trafficked with—and indeed enriched the coffers of—the hated slave power. But Douglass and his friends justified the negotiation on the ground that Douglass had not been *purchased* by the English. Instead, for a consideration, Hugh Auld had merely agreed to *manumit* him. The irony in all of this is that some of the abolitionists would have preferred Douglass to remain a fugitive slave.

Back in America in 1847, a free man, Douglass resumed lecturing and touring the country. But he was becoming restless with the tight controls placed on him by Garrison and the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society.

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He wanted to edit his own abolitionist newspaper, but the Society had other ideas. They wanted to use and control him, to employ his talents for their own programs and purposes. But Douglass, who already had a reputation for being uppity, was his own man. And it was with some irritation that the Garrison abolitionists finally acceded to Douglass's moving Anna and his household to Rochester in 1848, where he commenced his own radical newspaper, the *North Star*, a competitor with *The Liberator*. We know next to nothing, incidentally, about Anna's response to these matters because she was very withdrawn and did not participate in movement activities. All the evidence points to her being illiterate, and, despite many unsuccessful efforts to teach her to read, she was apparently of little public value to her husband in his developing career.

The Garrisonians did not like the *North Star*, but they were frankly appalled by developing events in Douglass's personal life. He had brought to America and installed in his own house the white radical Julia Griffiths, who was a member of the English anti-slavery movement. She was to serve as his business manager for the *North Star*, but there seems no reason to doubt that she was also his mistress, living in the same household with the illiterate Anna and their five children. None of these relationships is clarified in the autobiographies; in fact, Douglass was wonderfully reticent about his courtship of Anna, their marriage, and his own sexuality. But what seems unmistakable is that many women, of both races, found Frederick Douglass sexually attractive.

Douglass was a remarkably tall, muscular, and handsome young man with thick, black, curly hair, a pair of piercing eyes, a straight nose, thin and well-formed lips, a musical voice, and a light mulatto complexion—a combination that melted hearts on two continents. In addition, he was the brightest and most articulate slave ever to have joined the movement, almost too talented and exceptional to be believed. Some were so struck with his talents that they doubted that he had ever been a slave. Many did not believe that Douglass himself had written the 1845 *Narrative*. Since most slave narratives were dictated or ghost-written, Douglass's is preceded by the usual "Attestation" of its authenticity: two stirring prefaces—one by Garrison, the other by Wendell Phillips—confirming that, yes, Douglass was really a black slave and, yes, he had written the work himself. (In subsequent editions, these were replaced with introductions by black friends.)

Douglass's mixed blood, light complexion, and sexual charisma were a problem for many abolitionists, black and white. The Englishman Thomas Clarkson worried: "I wish he were full blood black for I fear pro-slavery people will attribute his preeminent abilities to the white blood that is in his veins." And so some of them did. Douglass, whose identity was securely that of a black man, wrote back comically from England that "I am hardly black enough for the british taste, but by keeping my hair as wooly as possible—I make out to pass for at least a half a negro at any rate." But the argument about the source of his talent went on and on. In the preface to *My Bondage and My Freedom*, the black James M'Cune Smith undertook to answer in print whether "Mr. Douglass's power [was] inherited from the Negroid, or from what is called the Caucasian side of his makeup"—only to conclude, naturally enough, that "for his energy, perseverance, eloquence, invective, sagacity, and wide sympathy, he is indebted to his negro blood." William S. McFeely, in his excellent biography, *Frederick Douglass* (1991), has reported some of the other wonderful but paradoxical responses to this remarkable slave:

> One of Douglass's Dublin admirers had a somewhat different slant on the problem: "Faith, an' if half a Naigar can make a speech like that, whut could a whole Naigar do?" At least one American knew the right answer to this excellent question: years later, Lizzie Lavender, a former slave herself, reflected "that

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> if a man who is only half black can become great like that, what may not be achieved by a person who is all black like me?"

In any case, Douglass the man attracted quite a number of radical groupies in England and America; and, in Julia Griffiths, he had brought one of them home to live with him in Rochester. As Douglass was by this time too well-known, popular, and successful to be controlled by the white anti-slavery establishment, he thought that he could weather the sexual scandal. But, with even *The Liberator* publicly critical of this ménage, the pressure became too much and in 1855 Julia Griffiths returned to England.[4]

In Douglass's eyes, the Garrisonians were coming to seem more and more irrelevant to American political developments. Garrison and the *Liberator* group saw the Constitution as an evil document that enshrined and protected slavery. Any participation in American politics was therefore corrupt and immoral. Some abolitionists wanted the North to secede from the South and its slave-defending federal government; others wanted Massachusetts to secede from the Union; the most radical of the Garrisonians even wanted Essex County to secede from Massachusetts. A long train of events had convinced Douglass that this hostility to the political process had not achieved any positive results. So in 1853 he threw in his lot with Gerrit Smith, merged his *North Star* with Smith's *Liberty Party Paper* so as to produce a new journal (*Frederick Douglass' Paper*), joined in with many others in an open *political* dialogue, and so provoked a bitter break with Garrison and the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society.

Douglass's activities thenceforward, until the outbreak of the Civil War, are what might have been expected from an ardent abolitionist. He continued to tour the country giving lectures on anti-slavery and urging other liberal causes in the "Sisterhood of Reforms" (Northern desegregation, temperance, anti-vivisectionism, female suffrage, more generous labor laws). Very often Douglass and his fellow speakers were heckled and shouted down, set upon by mobs, or beaten by racist thugs. Nevertheless, courageously, he persisted in his calling. In 1855, he published the second version of his autobiography, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, and urged the nascent Republican Party to become the party of abolition. He knew and supported John Brown in his assisting escaped slaves to reach Canada. But when in 1859 Brown told him of the plan to assault the Harpers Ferry Arsenal and to arm the slaves for an insurrection, Douglass knew that his friend had gone round the bend and declined to participate in the raid. Brown's confiscated papers mentioned the name of Douglass, and a request for his arrest was issued. This led Douglass to take an immediate unplanned voyage to Europe, where he met up with Ottilia Assing, and, on the lecture circuit he acclaimed, from afar, the martyrdom of John Brown.

When it was safe to do so, Douglass returned to America to support Lincoln for president. This was in 1860. Lincoln's opponent, that *other* Douglas—Stephen—had shrewdly foreseen, in the Second Debate in 1858, how a vote for Lincoln would result in the social equality of blacks; and Frederick Douglass was his warning to America.[5] Arguing that Lincoln was the tool of black abolitionists, Judge Douglas said,

> I have reason to recollect that some people in this country think that Fred. Douglass is a very good man. The last time I came here to make a speech, while talking from the stand to you, people of Freeport [Illinois], as I am doing to-

4 Julia Griffiths, it should be said, was not the only white woman with whom Douglass's name was romantically linked. Another was Ottilia Assing, a German revolutionary journalist who came to him in 1856 and remained an intimate friend until her death in 1884, the year that Douglass was remarried—this time to a white woman, Helen Pitts.

5 I quote here from the Library of America edition of *Abraham Lincoln: Speeches and Writings, 1832–1858*, which includes a reporter's parenthetical account of crowd reaction.

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day, I saw a carriage and a magnificent one it was, drive up and take a position on the outside of the crowd; a beautiful young lady was sitting on the box seat, whilst Fred. Douglass and her mother reclined inside, and the owner of the carriage acted as driver. (Laughter, cheers, cries of right, what have you to say against it, &c.) I saw this in your own town. ("What of it.") All I have to say of it is this, that if you, Black Republicans, think that the negro ought to be on a social equality with your wives and daughters, and ride in a carriage with your wife, whilst you drive the team, you have a perfect right to do so. (Good, good, and cheers, mingled with hooting and cries of white, white.) I am told that one of Fred. Douglass' kinsmen, another rich black negro, is now traveling in this part of the state making speeches for his friend Lincoln as the champion of black men. ("White men, white men," and "what have you got to say against it." That's right, &c.) All I have to say on that subject is that those of you who believe that the negro is your equal and ought to be on an equality with you socially, politically, and legally; have a right to entertain those opinions, and of course will vote for Mr. Lincoln. ("Down with the negro," no, no, &c.)

Despite the widespread public conflict aroused by these debates and by provocative abolitionist agitation, Frederick Douglass did not foresee Secession and the Southern attack on Fort Sumter. He did, however, welcome it. During the war—while Lincoln played that devious game with both whites and blacks, and Northerners and Southerners, over what would be done with the slaves—Douglass held Lincoln's feet to the fire. Emancipation, desegregation, education, and equality of opportunity were Douglass's objectives. He wanted blacks enlisted into the Union army, paid equally with whites, and accorded all the rights of citizenship. Douglass hoped to receive a commission himself and wanted to recruit black volunteers, but when the commission did not materialize he withdrew to his home and resumed his civilian agitation on behalf of black emancipation.

The nineteenth century was a great age of oratory, and, even in an era of extraordinary public spellbinders, Frederick Douglass was a master. He modeled his delivery on that of William Lloyd Garrison, one of the best speakers of the age. But Douglass commanded an even more impressive rolling stentorian style and employed a remarkably fluent vocal range. There are many reports of "the magnetism and melody of his wonderfully elastic voice." He had in fact a repertory of voices, and roles, and dialects that could evoke wonderful affects of pity and fear, joy and laughter. His gift for satirical mimickry —of Southern slaveholders, redneck overseers, and pompous pulpit defenders of slavery—was wicked and brought down the houses in constant laughter.

Douglass could mesmerize an audience of two thousand and more for two or three hours at a time. (How different are modern politicians, who aspire to master the thirty-second sound bite!) Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who acclaimed the "burning eloquence" of this fugitive slave, said that, when he warmed to the topic of the evils of slavery, he stood on the abolitionist platform "like an African prince, majestic in his wrath": "Around him sat the great antislavery orators of the day [Garrison, Pillsbury, and Phillips], earnestly watching the effect of his eloquence on that immense audience, that laughed and wept by turns, completely carried away by the wondrous gifts of his pathos and humor."

After the war Douglass continued to lecture on the lyceum circuit and publicly campaigned for successive Republican candidates—Grant, Hayes, Garfield, Blaine, and Harrison. He wrote widely and well on a wide range of topics—from the need for education and self-help to segregation, race relations, the failures of Reconstruction, and international politics. He stood for equality and saw the advancement of his people as a matter of equal opportunity. Though he hoped to be appointed to high office, Douglass was perhaps too abrasive and independent (if not too scandalous) for most Republican administrations. Grant gave him

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only a post with the 1871 commission investigating the idea of annexing the Dominican Republic for blacks. Hayes made him the U.S. Marshal for the District of Columbia in 1877, but Garfield demoted him to the post of recorder of deeds.

After Anna died, the sixty-six-year-old Douglass shocked nearly everyone by marrying, in 1884, Helen Pitts, a white woman from New York twenty years younger than he. Neither his children nor her family approved of this match, and the interracial marriage was widely criticized in the American press. Many blacks thought that he had turned his back on his race; while many whites saw it as another step toward the "mongrelization" of the Caucasian race. But Douglass knew in his own parentage that neither law nor custom can control desire or prevent love and affection from crossing racial lines; and without apologizing or explaining he simply acted on the principles by which he had always lived. (Meanwhile, in Paris, Ottilia Assing, the German friend who had translated his *My Bondage and My Freedom*, inexplicably committed suicide, leaving Douglass her library of personal books and an income of $13,000 a year.)

Frederick and Helen Douglass comported themselves with the greatest dignity, were very happy together, won over many of their detractors and, in 1889, Douglass was appointed minister resident and consul general to Haiti, a post he held until 1891. The appointment in Haiti contained much meaningful symbolism since, in many respects, Douglass was to his people something of what Toussaint l'Ouverture had meant to Haitians. His final years were quiet. But toward the end he made the friendship of the young black journalist Ida B. Wells and, spurred by her ardor and burning indignation, he recovered his passion for reform with a prolonged and effective attack on the appalling wave of black lynchings in the South. He died in 1895 and was buried with Anna in Rochester, New York.

In retrospect, it is clear that Frederick Douglass was the most important black in nineteenth-century America. His courage, conviction, and fiery eloquence created admiring audiences all over the United States and in Britain. He will therefore always have a place in the history of black emancipation and of American eloquence and platform oratory. Douglass's public performances are lost to us, since he lived before the invention of voice or audio recordings. But a distinct personality well worth knowing was created in these autobiographies, which are the work of a remarkable, versatile, and accomplished *writer*.

One of the most affecting passages in the autobiography appeared in the *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, where he described his return in 1876 to Talbot County, Maryland, to meet with the eighty-year-old Thomas Auld, his former master. After his escape Douglass had relentlessly and publicly attacked Captain Auld, by name, as the sadistic personification of slavery itself. By the outbreak of the Civil War, Auld was almost as well known as Douglass himself. But now the dying Auld had requested an interview. Although Douglass had nursed a lifetime of bitterness against his master, the visit produced a remarkable turn.

> We addressed each other simultaneously, he calling me "Marshal Douglass," and I, as I had always called him, "Captain Auld." Hearing myself called by him "Marshal Douglass," I instantly broke up the formal nature of the meeting by saying, "not *Marshal*, but Fredcrick to you as formerly." We shook hands cordially, and in the act of doing so, he, having been long stricken with palsy, shed tears as men thus afflicted will do when excited by any deep emotion. The sight of him, the changes which time had wrought in him, his tremulous hands constantly in motion, and all the circumstances of his condition affected me deeply, and for a time choked my voice and made me speechless. We both, however, got the better of our feelings, and conversed freely about the past.

For all Douglass's lifelong bitterness and acute recollection of every humiliation he

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suffered, this was a scene of mutual forgiveness and final reconciliation. Auld told Douglass new facts about his slave family that he had not known before, and Douglass discovered Auld to be blameless of some of the fiercest accusations Douglass had earlier brought against him. In fact, far from turning out Douglass's grandmother "like an old horse," as Douglass had charged, Auld had taken her in and provided for her to the end. Douglass discovered, in short, that he could no longer hate his former master.

Slavery *was* a monstrous evil, but within the interstices of any such barbaric network there will always slip that incalculable element—human feeling. It was the human equation—affection, to give it a name—that led Lucretia Auld to see that the young Douglass was assigned to the service of Master Lloyd and his son; it was affection that led Sophia Auld to want to lift the appealing young Douglass toward literacy; and it was affection, perhaps, in some warped and distorted form, that moved Captain Auld to rescue Douglass from that Easton jail in 1836—when he was on the point of being lynched for trying to escape—and return him to the Hugh Aulds in Baltimore. It takes nothing away from Douglass, who used expertly the occasions presented to him, but in some corner of his mind Douglass always knew that at crucial moments the Aulds, perhaps unconsciously, had opened doorways and created unexpected opportunities for his advancement. While the intent of Douglass's writing is always relentless anti-slavery propaganda, all three narratives move us, psychologically, toward this withheld acknowledgment of Auld's essential if fallen humanity and toward Douglass's final reconciliation with him. "He was to me no longer a slaveholder either in fact or in spirit," Douglass wrote, "and I regarded him as I did myself, a victim of the circumstances of birth, education, law, and custom." Douglass was of course denounced by some blacks for making his peace with a former slaveholder. But in transcending the desire for revenge and perpetual punishment, and in realizing this peaceful reconciliation of their differences, Douglass gave us our best hope for American racial harmony.

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An endless now: the art of Euan Uglow

by Karen Wilkin

During the past few months, some of the most provocative, difficult, and rewarding art in New York was to be seen in a pair of concurrent exhibitions by a British figurative painter. No, I don't mean the Lucian Freud shows at Robert Miller Gallery and the Metropolitan, but rather the Euan Uglow exhibitions at Salander–O'Reilly Galleries and the New York Studio School.[1] Given Uglow's obscurity in this country, this statement may surprise some readers. About half of the people to whom I recommended the Uglow shows said "Euan who?" Most of the others asked how "Uglow" was spelled. In England, no one would have asked. Uglow, now in his early sixties, has exhibited there and in Europe for about thirty years, accumulating awards, prizes, honors, and a band of serious admirers, including many of his fellow artists—abstract as well as figurative, it should be noted. But his shows at Salander–O'Reilly and the Studio School were his first solo exhibitions in the United States. That this mature, accomplished, and acclaimed painter should be virtually unknown on this side of the Atlantic is simply another indication of the peculiarities of reputation in today's international art world.

Light streams into Uglow's pictures, reflected warmly by naked flesh or harshly by painted backdrops; everything seems rational and ordered, as in a well-appointed Georgian house. There's no rhetoric. A first impression is that the pictures are utterly straightforward and very much about actual experience: this is what a nude model looks like when she is seated under a flood of light from an overhead skylight and observed from a particular distance, at a particular time. Uglow's economical drawings, with their sparse accumulations of slightly angular lines, seem equally direct, equally about *seeing* and recording what has been seen, as faithfully as possible, in terms of marks on a sheet.

Direct observation and fidelity to what has been perceived seem to be the keys to Uglow's pursuits. "Euan Uglow's passion is looking," the painter and critic Andrew Forge writes in his illuminating foreword to the Salander-O'Reilly catalogue. For many artists, at least since the advent of modernism, turning the act of looking into something visible on canvas or paper has been an exercise in intuition, an attempt to create a direct link between eye and hand that bypasses calculation. Accuracy, in the sense of the word that academic painters would have understood, has counted for little. So-called distortions and deformations have

1 "Euan Uglow: Paintings & Drawings" was on view at Salander–O'Reilly Galleries, New York, from December 2 through 31, 1993. A catalogue, with essays by Andrew Forge and John McLean, has been published by Salander–O'Reilly with Browse & Darby, London (unpaged, $25 paper). "Euan Uglow: Drawings" was on view at the New York Studio School from December 3 through 30.

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been accepted, even courted, since they were assumed to reflect the artist's feelings about his motifs. Uglow's pictures clearly spring from a very different set of assumptions. Accuracy of proportion, accuracy of tone, accuracy of hue are obviously of deep concern to him, and it takes only a brief exposure to his paintings and drawings for the viewer to realize that Uglow constantly checks the accuracy of his vision against a complex system of measurements. "Mad about measurement," Forge terms him, and points out Uglow's deep debt to the techniques of measurement codified by William Coldstream and passed on to his students, such as Uglow, at the Slade.

"The eye, suffused with memory, distracted by expectation, deceives itself," Forge writes.

> Typically a painter working from observation will measure only in order to correct. At the least, measurement shores up the relationship of the picture—thought of as a flat plane—to the model depicted. The marks that such a painter will make in the course of measurement are marginal, banalities usually erased. They belong to the "working out," no more.

But Uglow's paintings and drawings, as Forge reminds us, are littered with such marks, delicate ticks and crossings that form a kind of abstract scaffolding, a visual ground bass that serves both as a set of absolute, Platonically ideal relationships against which we can measure the image and as an integral part of the fabric of the painting. It's possible to justify some of these marks as literal records of the devices of Uglow's set-ups—the dangling plumb lines that slice the air around his model-stands or the diagrams of scale relations that are sometimes painted along the edges of his backdrops—but it's not quite that simple. There's no denying the literalness of Uglow's approach, in his effort to be true to what he learns by looking, but a certain ambiguity obtains, as well. He often creates a deliberate confusion in his work between what is a response to something observed and what are the traces of the method used to capture that response.

In his perceptive contribution to the catalogue, the London-based Scottish painter and writer John McLean points out that Uglow's color, while unmistakably individual, is always a response to local color. It's obvious that Uglow strives to paint each tone of each plane of light-struck or shadowed skin as accurately as possible, but it's less obvious that he derives every other aspect of a picture's hues from the same rigorous observation. Nothing can be invented arbitrarily on the canvas, but must undergo a process of transformation and distancing by having been seen. Just as the ghostly scaffolding that flickers through the finished paintings is both the residue of an internal system of measurement and a record of studio apparatus, background colors are not simply inventions called forth by the demands of the picture but also transcriptions of whatever (changing) colors Uglow has painted his model-stands and the walls of the rooms of his mews studio. (He is so concerned with reporting accurately on what he sees that he refuses to use chromatic color when painting under artificial light, but restricts himself to a "Cubist" palette of black, white, and ocher.) Colors are chosen for their associative and evocative powers; a brilliant blue might be selected to stand for sky, for example. But the difference between applying a background color to the confines of a canvas and applying that same color to a wall or model-stand, and *then* recording how that color appears when attached to a real surface and situated in a particular spatial relation to both the model and the artist's eye—such a difference clearly matters a great deal to Uglow. There's usually a logical, rational explanation for his most extravagant-seeming, apparently improvisatory choices. In one reclining nude, for example, the intense blue-green background, edged at the top with a row of cream, rose, and green rectangles, turns out not to be a compositional device but a pretty factual rendering of a view out a window where Uglow

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painted the picture. He was working in Italy for several months, in a studio overlooking Lake Lugano and the houses on its far shore.

Often, neither Uglow's most elaborate strategies for ensuring accuracy nor the conceptual bases that explain apparently "abstract" or irrational elements are readily or even ever intelligible to the casual viewer. There's a celebrated large-scale, vertical nude of 1972 (not in the Salander–O'Reilly show) in which the figure looks as though the model had been sliced horizontally and reassembled with pieces missing. Uglow was troubled by the distortions that resulted from observing a standing figure from close up, because of the shifting angle between the artist's eye and what he was looking at, as the stationary artist turned his gaze up and down the body of his model. To compensate for this, he devised a scaffolding that would raise or lower him, canvas, palette, and all, allowing him to paint a standing figure from twelve different views, which would nonetheless all be eye-level views at the time of painting. The "slices" in the resulting image are the gaps between these eye-level views. (It's actually more complicated than that, involving increases in size, based on changing perceptions, but that's the gist of it.)

Could you guess at this, even with the help of Uglow's explicit title, *Nude from Twelve Regular Vertical Positions from the Eye*? I'm not sure. There's no way of telling, either, that the decorated edge of the model-stand in a taut horizontal nude was constructed specially as a concave circle, so that each point of the edge would be equidistant from the artist's eye while he worked. It's possible that this is the only way a purist like Uglow could have achieved the insistent horizontality and speed of the edge as it appears in the painting, shooting across the bottom of the canvas as a rigid foil to the lean, outstretched body of the model, but I'm not convinced that this is at all evident to someone not initiated into Uglow's elaborate process.

Sometimes, Uglow leaves more obvious clues to his intentions. In one deadpan, symmetrical still life, a fifty-pence coin balanced on a round loaf of bread is a startling declaration of scale, forcing us to be aware that this was an enormous loaf, and that the artist was at a particular distance from it when he painted it. Other still lifes contain "ghost" images or are executed in sequences that record the slow deterioration and collapse of, for example, a vividly green pear. The pear, however, is rendered, as Forge has pointed out, with the solidity of rock, so that while imagery and sequence make us acutely aware of the passage of time and its effects, the way that imagery is presented reinforces a sense of permanence and stability.

It's not only surprising to find this degree of conceptualization in paintings so overtly about perception but there's also something slightly perverse about the important presence of what Uglow calls "the idea" in his work. His own explanation, however, is fairly simple. (Of course, Uglow finds nothing perplexing in his having built that scaffolding for viewing the model or having that concave circle constructed.) "I need an idea to keep me interested during all the time I'm working on something, through all those hours of drawing," he explains. "Sometimes the idea is pretty simple, but it keeps me going. I know a picture is finished when I start having other ideas about it."

In the end, it is probably the underlying presence of "the idea" (which makes itself felt, if not always visible), along with Uglow's obsessive devotion to scrupulous looking, that makes his work as fascinating as it is and rescues it from mere accomplishment. These seemingly forthright demonstrations of the possibilities of seeing turn out to be full of contradictions. It's reasonable to assume that Uglow proceeds from a basis of detachment, that he strives to maintain a cool objectivity that accords equal weight to every part of the picture. Yet that equality is clearly not one of disengagement but, rather, of fierce involvement. Everything that has found its way into the picture is there because of Uglow's intense observation. So focused does his "dispassionate" scrutiny become, in fact, that his effort to be

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purely faithful to perception makes itself felt not as a neutral activity but as something obsessive, strange, perhaps even compulsive.

The more time you spend with Uglow's pictures, the more inevitable they seem—and the odder. Often, they make you acutely aware of the passage of time. The objects in the still lifes contain the memory of previous states within their painted images; the models in the figure paintings seem to have settled into poses that could be held indefinitely (perhaps a necessity, given Uglow's achingly slow working methods). These days, too, non-ironic figurative painting such as Uglow's, which depends on neither mechanical reproduction nor appropriation, inevitably forces an awareness of the distance—and the time passed—between our era and the time when the aspirations of such painting would have been the norm rather than the exception. Yet there's a sense, also, of timelessness in Uglow's work, the result chiefly of the clarity and solidity with which he renders his motifs, the emphasis on the underlying geometry of forms that risks stiffness in the pursuit of lucidity. The clear light, the fresh, fresco-like palette, and the contained, dense volumes of these paintings have led Uglow's admirers to invoke Chardin, Piero della Francesca, and Egyptian art in their discussions of his work, and not without reason. Yet for all the honor Uglow obviously pays to an inherited tradition, there's nothing nostalgic or historicist about his art. He makes no attempt to re-create or even to evoke the past; his pictures seem to exist in an endlessly prolonged now.

Uglow's work is magically still, but it is not static. Perhaps the oddest thing about it, in fact, is its mutability. The longer we look, the more these apparently convincing images begin to unravel, to separate into component planes. Uglow's desire to render precisely what the eye sees as it moves over the motif, to capture exactly what is grasped in each "sight-byte," leads him to construct his images with discontinuous patches of paint. It leads him, too, to resist the elaborations of so-called "magic realism"; by addressing only what can be *seen* to be there, from the artist's viewpoint, rather than what is *known* to be there from other experiences, Uglow is able to separate conceptual accuracy from optical truth. Each of his *coups d'oeil* produces not a mass of finicky detail but a single plane, not blended or blurred to create an easy transition to the next plane but left distinct as the visible record of a single look. It's tempting to equate this practice with Cézanne's translation of perceptions into planes, but there are obviously immense differences between Cézanne's wholly empirical ways of re-creating his "sensations" and Uglow's highly systematic procedures. Equally unlike each other are Cézanne's method of filtering his "sensations" through a conception of warm and cool color modulation and Uglow's practice of translating "local color" into planes of relatively pure, high key, tonally accurate hues.

To some extent, the disjunctive quality of Uglow's staccato planes is counterbalanced by his rhythmic paint application, a repetitive touch that remains unchanged across the entire expanse of the canvas. The scale of the mark varies little. Together with the traces of the artist's system of measurement and the subtle breaks that mark the boundaries of each of Uglow's interrogative gazes, his even-handed touch helps to set up a kind of regular, ordered grid across the surface of the canvas, subverting the naturalism of the image. At the same time, paradoxically, the repetitive series of marks coalesces into the naturalistic image, as the viewer looks.

Uglow's fragile, often very beautiful drawings are equally anomalous. At first glance, they seem delicate, sensitive, and sure, with all evidence of hesitancy or indecision eliminated. Given this initial impression, it's startling to hear Uglow speak of how much time and effort he expends on each drawing. But, once alerted to his process, you begin to read the drawings in new ways. Economical fragments of line, strategically placed patches of tone, begin to declare themselves not only as evidence of things seen but also as lingering testimony

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to a whole succession of things seen and rejected. Uglow has permitted only the most characteristic and telling of his perceptions to remain on his page. His editing is evidently as rigorous as his observation—all of which not only makes for some very powerful drawings but also helps to explain the economy and inevitability of his best paintings.

Most of Uglow's paintings and drawings are fairly modest works, domestic in scale. At Salander–O'Reilly, I kept thinking of the tradition of the cabinet picture, meant to be lived with, in an intimate setting, unlike the vast rhetorical "machines" designed for the Salons in the hope of permanent public display. Uglow's pictures have the scale of real experience. They record a conventional distance—that between the artist and his model or of strangers across a room. (A rare tightly cropped head of a reclining nude was both one of the best pictures in the show and a surprise.) But for all their reference to the recognizable, they are pictures that demand a good deal of work on the part of the viewer. Reticent, concerned with private obsessions and obscure self-imposed programs of "research," Uglow's paintings are not what they seem. The artist convinces us of the importance and seriousness of his investigations, seducing us with clear, cool light and radiant, chalky color, and reminding us, usefully, of the potency of sight. But in the end, his pictures are less about seeing than about painting. They are not about depicting the known, but about making equivalents for experience in the sensual material of paint. The longer you spend with these apparently straightforward records of actual perception, the more enigmatic and abstract they become.

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Alasdair MacIntyre, religion & the university

by Maurice Cowling

Now in his early sixties and teaching at the University of Notre Dame, the Scottish-born philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre has had a distinguished career in America and England as a teacher of philosophy, psychology, and religion. His politics are naïve. As a philosopher he lacks the hard clinicality of English philosophers of his generation. But he writes eloquently, informally, and sympathetically about history, religion, and (by implication) literature, and has a breadth of interest that among his English contemporaries is equalled only by Ernest Gellner and among his juniors on the English Left only by Terry Eagleton and John Milbank.

Eagleton, after an early phase propounding liberationist Catholicism, has spent nearly two decades creating a latitudinarian Marxism that has pursued the complicated diplomacy involved in reconciling itself to the intellectual fantasies that have infected the French, German, and American universities in this period. Younger than Eagleton and broader and more theological than MacIntyre, Milbank is a "Catholic" Anglican who has spent his adult life both incorporating and subverting these fantasies. He has warned theologians to take Nietzsche and Foucault seriously and to understand that science—including social science—is not value-free. He argues that social science must of necessity be grounded in theology—the "queen of the sciences"—and should be recognized to have no autonomy in relation to theology.

Eagleton and Milbank are proponents of anti-empirical and, in a sense, anti-academic thought: Eagleton as a "total Marxist" for whom Marxism has to impregnate all types of academic endeavor, Milbank as a Christian for whom it is Christian theology that has to impregnate all types of academic endeavor. Both are unfriendly to the idea of academic autonomy as it has developed in "the liberal university." At the center of both, there is an emotional hostility to capitalism, which, in Milbank's case, criticizes Pope John Paul II's social doctrine as both "right-wing" and "incipiently fascistic."

Milbank is in early middle age, is a prodigy of learning and intellectual energy, and is in the process of becoming a cult figure among English and American theologians. Since he has not fully disclosed the nature of his theology even in *Theology and Social Theory* (1990), which deserves more detailed attention than it can receive here, there will be plenty of time in the future for humor to get to work on solemnity and for criticism to enquire whether simplification of his prose may not disclose a certain naïveté in his message.

Milbank is able to imply the presence of coherent argument behind an obscure rhetoric. In MacIntyre, who is a more cautious thinker and a less obscure rhetorician, and whose *oeuvre* is more complete than Milbank's, it is a religious odyssey as much as a coherent argument that has been disclosed through the prolonged transition that con-

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nects the Augustinian Thomist of the 1990s to the young MacIntyre of the 1950s.

Like Eagleton a decade and a half later, MacIntyre began adult life as both a Marxist and a Christian. But MacIntyre differed from Eagleton in being Protestant where Eagleton was Roman Catholic and in being neither working-class by upbringing nor moved by a desire to give cultural significance to working-class origins. MacIntyre's parents were doctors. He was at a middle-class boarding school in an outer-London suburb and he read Classics as an undergraduate subject at Queen Mary College, London. Where Eagleton was part of the student revolution of the late 1960s in Cambridge, MacIntyre had a disconcerting experience of student revolution while teaching at the University of Essex toward the end of the decade, and, in *Marcuse* (1970), made a withering criticism of one of the revolution's "intellectual patron-saints" for his betrayal of rationality, tolerance, and academic freedom. He also dilated on the "comic pomposity" of Marcuse's discussions of sex, his misunderstandings of Hegel, Marx, Wittgenstein, Freud, Reich, phenomenology, analytical philosophy, modern industrialism, Soviet Marxism, and contemporary America, and his absurd endorsement of the "hippy . . . and soul culture" of the "parent-financed . . . children's crusade" which a less "senile" thinker would not have mistaken for a "genuine" revolution.

When MacIntyre first appeared on the English intellectual scene, he had a political and philosophical doctrine as well as a doctrine about religion. He also gave extended consideration to the nature and status of psychology.

MacIntyre's account of psychology was given primarily in *The Unconscious* (1958), which analyzed the "sketchiness" of Freud's "theoretical background" and criticized the "haze of aspiration" that permitted psychologists to theorize without adequately understanding the logical character of their theories.

Although it was a skeptical book, *The Unconscious* was anti-positivist. It recognized that the unconscious was not to be rejected merely because it dealt with "unobservables," emphasized the help which his neurophysiological training had given Freud in his earliest discussions of it, and showed Freud clinging to the idea of the mind as "a piece of machinery" even after he had turned the unconscious into an existential reality. Freud's "unconscious" was "the ghost of the Cartesian consciousness" so much deplored by Wittgenstein; it confused "unconscious motives" as "purposes" with "unconscious motives" as "causes"; and in addition to not *explaining* the unconscious, it "described . . . and decoded" it in a form which reflected the "bourgeois Vienna" of Freud's earliest clinical practice.

MacIntyre's point was that cures could be effected even when theory was imperfect, and that Freudian psychotherapy and psychoanalytical theory had to be treated as being "relatively autonomous" in relation to each other. Not only was there a "clash" in Freud between "the language of rationality and responsibility" and the "determinism" he assumed was exerted on the "conscious life by the unconscious": there were also difficulties surrounding the transition from the "unfree" character of "neurotic behavior" to the "free choice" characteristic of the "normal person."

MacIntyre's dissection was meant to be critical, not dismissive. But it showed that the unconscious was "metaphysics" rather than science, and that Freud's insight into the "specifically human" needed completion by the sort of insight that was to be found in great fiction.

MacIntyre was not exactly disengaging from Freud, since it is uncertain that he had been engaged with him in the first place. But he made it clear in the course of the 1960s that psychoanalysts resembled priests, that their "pose of authority" was not the same as "the authority of rational argument," and that psychoanalysis was unique in the extent to which, "unbacked by political power or past tradition" and "unjustified on the basis of the criteria to which it . . . appealed," it

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had recommended itself to those parts of the "urban, middle-class intelligentsia" for whom Christian and Marxist belief had become impossible. At the same time, he began to explain why he too was beginning to find Christian and Marxist belief impossible.

In his first book—*Marxism: An Interpretation*, published when he was twenty-four—MacIntyre had pictured Marxism as a "Christian" rebellion against the Christian atheism that had identified Christianity with state or ecclesiastical control. Like Christianity, Marxism was declared to be a myth that had no claim to the "status of science" since one of the things science could not sustain was a conception of "orthodoxy." Also, like Christianity, Marxism had been corrupted by power, had displayed a "want of humility" in claiming science's "certainty" for its vision of society, and, in confining salvation to the proletariat, had replicated Christianity's confinement of salvation to the "doctrinally orthodox."

The young MacIntyre was neither a materialist nor an admirer of positivism (which he called a "faith . . . for intellectuals only"). He did not treat religion as illusion, and he criticized the Labour Theory of Value and the doctrine of the "increasing misery" of the proletariat under capitalism. He was Marxist notwithstanding because, where Christianity was not, Marxism was "breaking through bourgeois self-satisfaction" and might eventually lead to "liberation."

MacIntyre believed that Marxism was a "revelation of Christian eschatology" and the form under which eschatology had had to "enter the modern world." The motives that had been making men Marxists in the modern world, as he understood them, were the motives that had made men Christians in the Roman Empire. Marx had misunderstood the capitalist economy; but he had understood only too well the failure of capitalist civilization—the "freedom" that it offered "without security," the insufficiency of its "political rights," and the alienation it had effected not only of the "workers" but also of "the intellectuals . . . and the artists."

MacIntyre's criticisms of English society were secular as well as Christian. They were also *dramatized*, nowhere more shallowly than in the contrast between the two "images" that were available to the "intellectual"—the image of Keynes as both beneficiary and intellectual guardian of the "established order" who had provided "new policies and theories of manipulation to keep our society in . . . economic trim," and the image of Trotsky, who, where Keynes had ended his life with a peerage, had ended *his* life with a "pickaxe in his skull" as a reward for a lifelong defense of the powers of human effort.

MacIntyre's dissatisfaction with British society in the 1950s and 1960s began from the idea that British intellectuals no longer had an "imaginative vision" of the future; he was especially contemptuous of the desire of "scholarship-boys" to "sit at the feet of the port-drinkers" of the older universities and to "get on" in the great bureaucracies, including the scientific bureaucracies which ran the state and private industry. These, he believed, were symptoms of a degeneration which had been theorized into a "meritocracy" and moralized into an "ideal," and he failed entirely to empathize with the upwardly-mobile sentiments of the full-scale, lower-middle-class invasion of English universities which began after the fall of France in 1940. In rejecting the skepticism of Lewis Namier and Michael Oakeshott, the emasculating empiricism of Popperian sociology, and the divorce of the Kantian and existential *ought* from any sort of *is*, he called on the universities to perform the function he believed they had performed previously, of resisting the "molding pressures" of industry, advertising, and the state.

MacIntyre's instruments of resistance were the liberationist Marxism with which Georg Lukacs had renounced his apostasy during the Hungarian revolt of 1956, a reassertion of the "human agency" which had been diminished by both bureaucratic Stalinism and Fabian and welfare-state elitism, and rejection of the British Labour govern-

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ment of 1945 and the Gaitskellite Labour party as respectively a "continuation of the wartime coalition" and an "alternative Conservative party" waiting for its turn in power.

For MacIntyre, the "Marxist theory of class struggle" was a corrective of individualism and an indication of the possibility of a shared humanity. Marxism, however, was declared to be as incompatible with Russian reality as Mill's liberalism was with American reality. American theory was criticized for pointing Mill's principles at Russian society without pointing them at American society, while Trotsky, the Hegel of the *Phenomenology*, Marx in the 1840s, and Lukacs and Lenin were instanced as proof that Marxism did not *have* to issue in Stalinist bureaucracy.

MacIntyre's political writings after 1954 demanded everything that the student revolution was to demand thereafter. They denied that "revolutionary liberation" was a "fantasy" and a flexible Marxism an impossibility; and they found in Lucien Goldmann's hermeneutical suggestiveness a vision through the "coherence of great art and philosophy" of something which "the thought and action of ordinary men" displayed only by implication. And if (as in the end he did) MacIntyre turned against the student revolution and blamed its emergence on end-of-ideology ideologists of the 1950s like Daniel Bell, that may merely have been a facet of the fact that, in acquiring his revolutionary posture before the revolting students had acquired theirs, he had mixed his Christianity up with it.

Just as in *The Unconscious* MacIntyre was slimming down Freud and in writing about politics he was slimming down Marx, so in writing about religion he was slimming down Christianity.

MacIntyre at this time was a practitioner of linguistic analysis. But he judged logical positivism insensitive to the variety of human utterances and doubted its ability to define the nature of religious utterance—once such utterance was seen to be neither truth, transcendental ontology, nor speculative metaphysics, and had failed to fall into any of the categories which Ayer had specified in *Language, Truth and Logic*.

In the 1950s, MacIntyre denied that philosophy should make religious utterance "logically reputable." He argued that it should understand it for what it was—a matter of "how men were to live" and what their "fundamental attitudes were to be." Religion needed "authoritative . . . rules" that "defined the worshipful"; and metaphysics, so far from being, as the Idealists had supposed, the friend of religion, was a rival which should not be allowed to appropriate theological language in constructing ultimate beliefs.

From this point of view "religious practice" was not the "application" of religious doctrine, and men could worship without being able to say clearly what they believed since, in the act of worship, they talked "to" God rather than "about" Him and formulated doctrine only as a way of "saying what they did" when they were doing this. So far from *doctrine* being central, therefore, it was suggestiveness, reticence, vocativeness, praise, devotion, hopefulness, and the imprecision characteristic of "the language of liturgy"—in other words, almost everything apart from doctrine—that were central.

In seeking a justification of religious belief, MacIntyre emphasized both the concern it shared with imaginative literature for "the central situations in human life" and the transcendence it achieved of imaginative literature by reason of the believer's decision to make belief "directive of . . . behavior." In stating that the "myths" and "narratives" that religion brought with it told those who believed them "something about the universe," he added that they should not be thought of as making God an explanatory hypothesis, since to do so would rule out the "free decision" to love Him which was of the essence of Christianity.

MacIntyre did not say much about orthodoxy, except that each religion had an orthodoxy that determined what was and was not included in it. At the same time, he said a good deal about authority and conversion, because these were what distin-

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guished religious utterance and belief from "experiences of awe," "intimations of immortality," and the synthetic mish-mash that had been propagated—though he did not name them—by Toynbee and Whitehead.

What MacIntyre was affirming was the impregnability of religious belief, its inaccessibility to philosophical or historical disproof, and its character not only as "humility" and "obedience" but also as "passion," like the passion involved in married love. Belief, moreover, even when it could not "argue," could "preach," as preach it did, in offering "the acceptance of . . . authority" *in a way that was "beyond" argument.*

These specifications of the nature of Christianity, Marxism, and psychoanalysis were aspects of an attempt to mount an intellectual criticism of British public life in the decade and a half before the student revolution. They were then followed by the process of disengagement.

The disengagement from psychoanalysis, implicit in *The Unconscious*, was strengthened by the discovery that Freud's sociology was incoherently individualistic and had been given a local habitation in the "cultural desert" created by the "liberal intelligentsia of New York and the Californian cities" where a theory had been believed in which "perhaps [was] not as well confirmed as witchcraft or astrology." In disengaging from Marxism, the objections were that Marx had failed to provide the "social psychology" that his politics needed, that Marxist theory had had too little interest in the nature of morality, and that Marxists had failed to move on to a "post–Marxist ideology of liberation."

In disengaging from Christianity, MacIntyre rejected almost all the arguments with which he had defended it in the 1950s. By the time he made his disengagement public in 1971, the "self-conscious . . . atavism" of T. S. Eliot and the Tractarians, the Neo-Protestantism which had been borrowed from Pascal, Kierkegaard, and Barth, and the accommodating Protestantism of Tillich, Bultmann, Robinson, Bonhoeffer, and van Buren had all become equally impossible: religion could not be made "logically invulnerable" by insulating it from culture and life; it was "too late" both for medieval Christianity, which had been the "corrupted religion of a subsistence economy," and for that evacuation of "theistic content" which had accompanied the attempt to "translate" Christianity into the terms of modern thought.

In reviewing W. O. Chadwick's *Secularization of the European Mind* in 1976, MacIntyre remarked that Christianity had been secularized as well as the European mind, that Newman had written "against the *mainstream* Christianity which [he had] encountered," and that, as a "Christian theologian," Chadwick might have been expected to write at the very least a history "which differed in [some] significant way from the history written by non-Christians." It was to be MacIntyre's concern with history in place of analytical philosophy, and with Aristotelianism, Augustinianism, and Thomism in place of Protestantism, that were to issue in two Catholicizing works—*Whose Justice, Which Rationality?* and *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*—which he was to publish in 1988 and 1990.

In the 1970s, MacIntyre wrote many articles about ethics, medical ethics, and philosophy. His *Short History of Ethics* had a continuous circulation as a textbook, and *Against the Self-Images of the Age* gave an accessible version of articles that had been published in less accessible form previously. It was not, however, until *After Virtue* was published in 1981 that a new MacIntyre began to take off, and not until the publication of *Whose Justice, Which Rationality?* seven years later that a prediction which Gellner had made seventeen years earlier was to be fulfilled by the announcement that MacIntyre was an Augustinian Christian.

Much of what MacIntyre had written about religion in the 1950s had been consistent with a Barthian hankering after Roman Catholicism as an antidote to theological Liberalism. He had then moved a long way away from both by *renouncing* Christianity.

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It is also the case that the two major works of the late 1980s were indirect about the Roman Catholic implications of the view they took of morality and moral inquiry, and that *After Virtue*—in spite of a genuflection toward St. Benedict—was almost completely devoid of direct religious significance.

After Virtue disowned MacIntyre's previous writings as "armchair" analytical philosophy which, even so, had failed to avoid an "evaluative standpoint." In attempting to be explicit about his evaluative standpoint, he provided a Collingwoodian history of European thought in which the moral mode, invented by Homer, Plato, and Aristotle and extended into the Middle Ages, was the high point from which everything that had followed had been a deterioration. "It is always dangerous," went an antinomian passage,

> to draw too precise parallels between one historical period and another; and among the most misleading of such parallels are those which have been drawn between our own age in Europe and North America and the epoch in which the Roman Empire declined in the Dark Ages. Nonetheless, certain parallels there are. A crucial point in that earlier history occurred when men and women of good will turned aside from the task of shoring up the Roman *imperium* and ceased to identify the continuation of civility and moral community with the maintenance of that *imperium*. What they set themselves to achieve instead . . . was the construction of new forms of community within which the moral life could be sustained so that both morality and civility might survive the coming ages of barbarism and darkness. If my account of our moral condition is correct, we ought also to conclude that for some time now we have reached that turning-point. What matters at this stage is the construction of local forms of community within which civility and the intellectual moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages which are already upon us. And if the tradition of the virtues was able to survive the horrors of the last dark ages, we are not entirely without grounds for hope. This time, however, the Barbarians are not waiting beyond the frontiers; they have already been governing us for quite some time. And it is our lack of consciousness of this that constitutes part of our predicament.

This meant two things. On the one hand, it meant that MacIntyre disliked the industrial and Weberian regimes that were governing Europe and the United States and deplored the dominance that they were permitting "markets, factories and bureaucracies" to establish over individuals. On the other hand, it meant that moral inquiry had been impoverished by the destruction of Aristotelianism in the seventeenth century and the disconnection of ethics from divine law in the eighteenth century. Existing "languages of morality," in his view, were merely fragments of a conceptual scheme which was no longer present in its entirety, and consequently the ethical theories propagated by such diverse thinkers as G. E. Moore, Sartre, Robert Nozick, John Rawls, and Sir Isaiah Berlin were as empty as those of Locke, Hobbes, Hume, and Kant before them.

MacIntyre's argument was that the breakdown of the attempt to "provide an independent justification of morality" was manifesting itself in contemporary society's inability to achieve a proper patriotism. Modern politics was "civil war carried on by other means"; government, especially American government, so far from representing the "moral community of citizens," was the imposition of a "bureaucratic unity" on a society which lacked "genuine consensus," so much so that the "individualist . . . acquisitiveness and . . . market values" endemic in the "economic order" had to be rejected if ethics was once more to become "the science" which enabled "man . . . as-he-happened-to-be" to become "man-as-he-could-be-if-he-realized-his-essential-nature."

The search for a reputable way of criticizing the modern world had been one of MacIntyre's leading preoccupations in the the 1950s and 1960s. *After Virtue* and *Whose Justice?* now pursued this in an expository or critical-historical way, *Three Rival Versions* in a more reflective way.

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Whose Justice? and *Three Rival Versions* had the idea of a "tradition" or "succession of traditions" as the route by which moral roles become entrenched in the individual mind or will. Both works were more Thomist and Augustinian than *After Virtue* had been; both gave more detailed attention to Aquinas's marriage of Aristotle to Augustine than *After Virtue* had done. *Three Rival Versions* credited Augustinianism, Thomism, and Leo XIII's encyclical *Aeterni Patris* with an ability to transcend not only the perspectivism of Foucault and Nietzsche, but also the "scientific truth" about moral inquiry promulgated by the Ninth Edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and the foundation-deeds of the Gifford Lectures to which —like MacIntyre in 1988—many of the contributors to the Ninth Edition had contributed a hundred years earlier.

MacIntyre rejected the *ex cathedra* encyclopedism with which the authors of the Ninth Edition had rejected *ex cathedra* orthodoxy. But toward Nietzsche and, by implication, toward Foucault and their practice of "genealogy," he maintained a measure of ambivalence. He pointed out in relation to both that their denial of the possibility of truth was a function of their belief that truth was a facet of a "will to power" exerted on behalf of some particular "perspective."

The substantive part of *Three Rival Versions* drew attention to the "unity" of European philosophy from Socrates to Aquinas. It emphasized Suarez's and Descartes' role in freeing Reason from the "bonds of any particular moral and religious community" and the need to restore the Thomist position for which Reason emerged from "membership in a particular type of moral community." It described philosophy as an "apprenticeship in a craft" that required "moral" in addition to "intellectual" virtues, and rationality so far from being either mere "domination" or a "mask . . . worn with a self-distorting lack of self-knowledge" as being the genuine pursuit of a "truth that was timeless."

These were assertions, as such engagements always are, and as such they are not more persuasive than usual. Nevertheless, they were what MacIntyre wished to say. They constituted a subtler and more sensitive assertion than the assertion he had been making in England between 1954 and 1967. If scarcely an *orthodox* contribution to Roman Catholic thought, they provided a considered reply to mid-Victorian "objectivity," to the Kantian Thomism which Grabman, Mandonnet, and Gilson had destroyed, and to the Nietzschean and Foucauldian negativity that has been sweeping American universities during the twenty years that MacIntyre has been teaching there.

In the main chapters of *Three Rival Versions*, MacIntyre presents three reasons for the strength of Thomism. In the first place, by "reappropriating the past" toward a "particular and yet eternal future," Thomism issued in "theoretical inquiry" as well as "practical embodiment." Second, instead of reducing the past to a "mere prologue to the present," Thomism treated its narrative of the past as "that from which we are to learn if we are to identify and move towards our *telos*." And third, Aquinas, as the "philosopher . . . of theoretical enquiry into the practical life," had responded to the "apparently antagonistic claims" of Aristotelianism and Augustinianism through the "tradition- . . . and . . . craft-constituted" form of moral inquiry which had been explained in *Whose Justice, Which Rationality?*

Whose Justice? was a meditation on the conflicting traditions in European moral reflection, including the tradition Aquinas had received from Homer, the Bible, Aristotle, Augustine, and the Arabs; the Scottish tradition on the way from "Calvinist Aristotelianism to its encounter with Hume"; and what MacIntyre called the "liberal tradition."

MacIntyre's account of Liberalism was that it involved a "form of social order" in which individuals could "emancipate themselves from the contingency of tradition" and appeal to "universal . . . norms" that were "independent" of tradition. A liberal social culture involved an absence of "overall unity" and a compartmentalization of the

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"spheres . . . within . . . which . . . good was pursued"; and not only was Liberalism "intolerant" of "rival conceptions of the good," it also replaced "debate" about the "public" good by forms of thought and action which accorded with "the public realms of the market and of liberal-individualist politics."

This, though as much a condemnation of the United States in the 1980s as MacIntyre's moral philosophy had been of Britain in the 1950s, has been expounded in the United States with a new historical perspective. There has been a determination to establish that Liberalism is pervasive in modern culture, that all "contemporary debates" are conducted in its language, and that it is inseparable from a political system in which "the consumer, the voter and the individual in general" express preferences between alternatives of which the elite's "cosmetic" capability controls the presentation. It has also been conducted in the light of that avoidance of relativism and perspectivism which Newman had achieved in describing the "tradition of Catholic Christianity."

MacIntyre recognizes the difficulty of extracting Newman's view of tradition from the theological form in which Newman put it. He writes, nevertheless, as Newman's heir. And in rejecting the liberal assumption that every rational person is "free *and . . . able* to read every book," has taken up Paul de Man's idea that there is a "moral relationship between author and text and text and reader" which makes it impossible to believe that "standards of rationality" are "equally available . . . to all persons whatever tradition they happened to find themselves in."

The main chapters of *Three Rival Versions* showed why Thomism was the right mode of belief and sketched the substance, and Aquinas's resolution, of the conflict between the Augustinian and Aristotelian conceptions of moral inquiry. In describing the impact of Aristotelianism on Augustinianism, they described an "incommensurability," like the incommensurability described by Kuhn, Bachelard, and Feyerabend, between early modern and late medieval science, the incommensurability which Islamic and Jewish theologians had been wrestling with before the problem had been transferred to Western Europe, and the incommensurability that MacIntyre himself is conscious of in the twentieth century.

The lesson that MacIntyre extracted from modern accounts of the Middle Ages was twofold. On the one hand, there was the lesson that it was "only by learning what the texts had to teach" that the reader could "read the texts aright" and only when there was "humility," "faith in authority," and a "redirection" of the "perverse . . . will" that the intellect and desires were able to approach "rational understanding" of "that of which the text spoke." On the other hand, there was the lesson that the Augustinian belief in the divine creation of the world, the defective character of the human will, and the human mind's need of divine illumination had had to be related—if knowledge was to be acquired—to an Aristotelianism which believed that the human intellect was "adequate" to "its objects" and "competent to arrive at both theoretical and practical truth."

MacIntyre described the caution with which the Augustinian authorities had reacted to Aristotelianism in the early thirteenth century and the sense in which the "incommensurability" of the conflict *could* only have been resolved by a thinker who did not need to "translate" either "conceptual scheme" into the other because he was in effect the "native speaker" of both languages.

The idea of Aquinas, or anybody else, as a native speaker of two languages (or inhabitant of a boundary area between two cultures or traditions) has exercised MacIntyre profoundly. It is not the case, however, that his resolution of the problem has been as persuasive as the exercise.

MacIntyre argues that "force" exerted by one culture or tradition on another might "on occasion . . . serve the purposes of genuine practical rationality." But he argues also that it is only through "impersonal standards of judgment" that it is possible to

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avoid arbitrariness. He has left little reason to suppose that such "impersonal standards" exist. It is in *tradition*'s readiness to "transfer . . . allegiance" to another tradition when internal contradictions or "epistemological crises" dissolve its "historically found certitudes," on the contrary, that he finds the source of the living power that Aquinas exercised in the thirteenth century and Descartes in the seventeenth century and that needs to be exercised today if Liberalism is to be corrected in the twentieth century.

What MacIntyre admires about Aquinas is that he avoided the high-minded impartiality characteristic of academic philosophy. He "gave organized expression to concepts and theories already embodied in forms of practice" and he did this within the framework both of "Christian dogma" and a dialectical "incompleteness" which established that Aristotle's "account of the rational world" was "the prologue required for an Augustinian theology."

These were reversions to MacIntyre's Marxist belief in the inseparability of theory from practice. But they were put in new ways—in the affirmation that "the Augustinian scheme of theoretical and practical enquiry" could only be justified by "a participant" in it, in the claim that the "practice of the moral virtues" was "central to our acquiring knowledge of them," and in the assertion that it was impossible to learn what the *Summa* taught unless men "already to some degree . . . possessed . . . that virtue of practical intelligence and judgment which could not be possessed unless the moral virtues were possessed."

MacIntyre was aware of the "sense of affront" that had been caused by the refusal of "Augustine's high-medieval heirs" to respond to "modernity's" demand for arguments. But he was as unrepentant as he had been in England thirty years earlier. He dismissed "academic . . . neutrality" as a "fiction of the encyclopaedist" and gave his *imprimatur* to the idea that "there could be no shared premises unless . . . the word of the scriptural preacher was heard as authoritative." It was Aquinas's *methodological* merit that he had summarized on each question the "strongest arguments for and against each answer" which had been formulated in the traditions he had inherited so as to "leave open the possibility" of returning to a question "with some new argument" in the future. It was his *substantive* merit that he had married Aristotle's account of the human good and practical reasoning to Augustine's account of sin and the "defective human will," and had connected the Aristotelian "criteria for an ultimate good" to the biblical and Augustinian belief that ultimate good could only be found in the "relationship of the soul" to that "state of perfect happiness which was the contemplation of God in the beatific vision."

MacIntyre distinguished the Averroist or Hobbesian denial of an "ultimate end," the Lutheran "despair of moral achievement," and the "existential" despair of the modern world, from the Thomist discovery one made "in oneself and in all other human beings" of "something surd and unaccountable" which had been "unknown in the ancient world." That Man could not "live by the natural law" or "achieve the excellences of the virtues" led to the conclusion that not every reader could understand Aquinas. There had to be a "moral relationship" if understanding was to be achieved, and Thomism could only be understood by those who had experienced the fact of sin and the reality of God's grace.

It was, of course, convenient for MacIntyre that Aquinas held "a version of the Labour Theory of Value," that he had "inherited from the patristic tradition" a view of the limitation of property rights which Hume and Blackstone were to reject, and that he had drawn a distinction, which "lacked application in the . . . economics of free markets," between "the value" of "a thing" and its "worth" to a "particular person." It was equally convenient that "unjust laws" did not require obedience, that the "standard commercial and financial practices of capitalism" were incompatible with Aquinas's conception of justice, and that Aquinas's "metaphysical theology" justified

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a "radical break" not only with the practices and assumptions of the thirteenth century but also with the practices and assumptions of the twentieth century.

Although he is complicated and often opaque, MacIntyre is remarkably suggestive. But he is scarcely more successful now than he was in the 1950s and 1960s in integrating virtue and practice. He still has the greatest difficulty showing how they *can* be integrated and he rejects the opportunities that beckon once it is understood that economic Liberalism and religious Liberalism do not entail each other.

The challenge to integrate virtue and practice is both ambitious and laughable. But since we are trying to understand MacIntyre rather than to discredit him, it may be desirable to say in conclusion how it is that he wishes universities to react to it.

MacIntyre is an enemy of Liberalism in both an economic and a religious sense. His ratification of the pluralism of modern academia is not, therefore, a liberal ratification, but a persuasion past Liberalism to that union of faith and inquiry which for him is the proper way to the higher knowledge. And he is clear that for the humanities it is the setting up of a confrontation between moral or religious Liberalism and its alternatives that is the source of hope, because this will not only undermine an "academic objectivity" which is not objective, but will also prove that the "appearance" of "virtue" required of "those who claim public and political authority" in Britain and the United States is illusory.

In "How to Seem Virtuous Without Actually Being So," a lecture delivered at the University of Lancaster in 1991, MacIntyre underlined the reluctance of the "dominant liberal culture" to "appoint teachers on the ground of their moral character."

> The issues raised by moral education [he went on] are very much the same as those raised by religious education. . . . Just as an education which purports to be neutral between rival controversial religious standpoints always ends up in teaching no religion at all and thereby irreligion, so an education which purports to teach a morality neutral between rival controversial standpoints concerning the virtues will end up in teaching a largely indeterminate morality [which lacks] determinate answers to those questions in terms of which any substantive and determinate account of the virtues has to state its positions.

This was a criticism of the prevailing "morality"—the "minimum" morality which allowed the "political order" to be "neutral" between rival standpoints insofar as their adherents complied with the requirements of "public order" but which "failed" to "extrapolate" from those situations in which men had "first learned" what "justice, courage and generosity" required, the requirements of the "new and unfamiliar situations" to which they had not been applied previously. It was this that was enabling men to "seem virtuous without actually being so," this that was emptying morality of function. The problem it presented to *universities* was to show why morality ought *not* to be emptied of function. The problem it presented to MacIntyre was to know how to proceed in the absence from the modern world "of any independent forums for debate" *outside* the universities.

About universities, MacIntyre has been reluctant and standoffish, unwilling to accept the game they are playing but persuaded of the impossibility of financing the requisite seriousness and discrimination anywhere else. It is for this reason that he has been forced back on the conception that universities should reflect the divided condition of the modern world and become "places where rival views of rational justification" are "given the opportunity" both to "develop their own enquiries" and to initiate students into the "conflict" about morals and religion that he wishes to uncover from beneath the blandness and illusoriness of the Liberal consensus.

MacIntyre's ideal is a university system that reflects the mind of an educated public

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able to think coherently in faith and under authority about moral and theological truth. But he does not expect it to be realized. He seems (surprisingly) disinclined to conceptualize the confessional university, and adopts his position because the professionalization of higher education and its abandonment of "substantive" inquiry into "moral and religious truth" seem likely to perpetuate disunity.

About some things MacIntyre is right—about the failure of great-books curricula to show that civilization consists of "rival and incomplete traditions," about modern self-congratulation in relation to the "abolition of religious and moral tests and exclusions," and about the modern university's failure to realize that Liberalism itself imposes informal versions of the tests and exclusions it has abolished formally. His writing since *After Virtue*, however, has been problematical. It is not only a lament about the marginalization of academe and the detachment of morality from religion but also an inquiry whether it is possible to restore religion's role in the new conditions of the modern world.

This, from MacIntyre's point of view, is an intelligible question to ask in an age in which there is an entrenched correctness about morals and religion, and even some Catholic universities hesitate to teach Catholic truth. But the real difficulty is that modern universities teach, if only obliquely but still as an aspect of their inconclusiveness, a form of substantive truth which is post- or anti-Christian.

This consideration is fundamental. It is much later than MacIntyre supposes and, though he is traveling hopefully, it is to a destination at which he is unlikely to arrive. Certainly he understands that Liberalism is an oppressive and exclusive ideology. But equally certainly he seems not to take into account the depth of its entrenchment, the variety of the forms that it takes, and the extent to which his tactical demand for conflict involves a substantive acceptance of its inconclusiveness. Whatever their economic orientation and even when their language is *post*–Liberal, humane studies in modern universities are in the grip of a secular Liberalism which detaches morality from religion and leaves its mark on morality even where morality remains *attached* to religion. The conflict that MacIntyre wants is probably the only way forward in a difficult situation. But if his objective is the entrenchment of Thomism where Liberalism and post-Liberal correctness are entrenched at present, there is little reason to suppose that he will be successful.

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"The telling"
by John Haines

I

"There is one and only one . . ."

So was your fortune told,
as the palm reader scanned
the past, the present
and future, and then went on
in the telling
of an inexplicable journey.

II

I see lines that cross,
that travel together
and seem to part again.

I see a large flock of birds
circling a single figure,
and somewhere nearby
a small burial is taking place,
with the sound of dirt
hitting a cardboard box.

And once more the lines converge,
are thickened with grieving
and unexplained departures.

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I see a forest path; beside it
a waterfall, and someone
diving repeatedly into a pool.

I see a house, divided by many rooms.
Three children are searching
the hallways and opening doors;
they enter a smaller room
and vanish into another country.

I see honor and happiness there.

And you and I were together there,
waking and sleeping, speaking
the names we were given,
". . . as if we did not know
each other well, but our souls did."

I see how it all combines
and reassembles, completed in this
one unfailing image—a woman
telling fortunes, casting
the future in someone's open palm:

"There is one and only one . . ."

III

The forest path is empty.

That house and its people,
the search and the children's story,
dissolve to an open park
where someone is throwing a ball
at the root of a tree;
others, silent and grouped
at a distance, are keeping score.

And all these characters and scenes
are displaced by shadows
that loom and slowly clear . . .

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In that improbable, fantastic place
I shall be planted somewhere
with trees and natural stones,
turned slowly round
in the hollow of obedient earth.

And you, awake in the world,
without a shadow and less
than human, your ghost children
driven before you
down the cobbled mazes—
mouth open,
cropped hair in a fiery light,
and your finally stricken heart,
wondering and amazed . . .

—1991-93

—John Haines

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Music

On hearing Liszt live

by Samuel Lipman

Instrumental recitals are hardly the vogue these days. Piano recitals, once the mainstay of the classical-music business, are now an endangered species. And among the restricted number of piano recitals given, few are devoted to the music of one composer. When such specialized programs take place, they are usually devoted to the music of Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, or Chopin. Recitals of the once-celebrated Franz Liszt (1811–1886) are practically unheard of nowadays. Furthermore, remarkably few works by Liszt (and always the same few) are currently available on CD by celebrated pianists.

I had never heard of the Hungarian pianist Christina Kiss before seeing her tiny recital advertisement in *The New York Times* Sunday "Arts & Leisure" section in early December. There, almost completely submerged by the florid notices for Christmas and Chanukah musical events, was a box announcing an all-Liszt recital, part of an eleven-year series of forty-five recitals comprising all the more than a thousand compositions (the number is approximate and subject to all kinds of scholarly quibbling) of the great nineteenth-century virtuoso poet of the piano. Though she is giving these recitals, Miss Kiss does not seem to be recording the Liszt piano works, and no recordings by her seem to be listed in the current Schwann/Opus catalogue.[1] Miss Kiss's advertised program consisted of a first part containing several short pieces, some of which were unfamiliar to me, and a second part containing but one work, the Liszt transcription—for a mere two hands at one piano!—of Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony. Prospectively, I didn't find much interest in the short pieces. But the *Eroica* whetted my appetite: though I was familiar with the written text of this mammoth and universally unprogrammed Liszt undertaking—and had even sight-read some of it—I had no idea how it would sound played by someone who had prepared it for concert performance. I immediately phoned for reservations and, to my surprise, obtained very good seats, even though the concert was only a few days away in the very small Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall.

To explain my interest in Liszt, a few words about him—and about my own relationship to his music—are in order here. Liszt was once a tremendously famous composer. Over the past half-century, however, his sun has very much set. A hero not just of the piano but of the romantic nineteenth century in art and life, Liszt spanned the cen-

1 The Schwann/Opus catalogue does, however, list a complete CD recording of the Liszt piano works by the Australian pianist Leslie Howard on the Hyperion label, and an almost complete recording on cassette tapes by the American Gunnar Johansen (a pupil of, among others, the Liszt student Frederic Lamond) on the Artist Direct label. I have heard neither of these recordings.

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tury. As a child he supposedly received a kiss on the forehead from Beethoven and as an old man he lived to mourn the death of his protégé and son-in-law, Richard Wagner. He was as famous a virtuoso as the violinist Paganini (1782–1840). But unlike Paganini, who struck his audiences as both a demon and a charlatan, Liszt was a musician through and through. He wrote a vast body of compositions for piano, for orchestra, for organ, and for voices. He was, like the nineteenth century itself, both bohemian and religious. His three known children were born out of wedlock; at the same time he was a devoutly religious Catholic who by the end of his life had taken many minor religious orders. He was a generous friend to such composers as Schumann, Chopin, and Wagner, and he taught hundreds of students, many of whom made important careers at the end of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth. Remarkably, some of these pianists left recordings, now available on CD, that tantalize us with glimmers of what the master himself may have sounded like.

Despite his works for orchestra, organ, and voices, Liszt was first, last, and always a composer for the piano. He was also the greatest pianist of his, and probably any, time.[2] He breathed, he thought, he felt, and above all he conquered through the (in his days) eighty-five keys of the piano. He oversaw the transformation of the piano from the rickety and sonically limited instrument of his youth to the silver-toned, powerful, and mechanically reliable musical treasure we possess today. He was the chief inventor of the piano recital. It is said of him that when the Tsar, graciously in attendance at a Liszt recital, broke the musical spell by talking, the pianist got up from the piano and left the stage, saying "When the Tsar of all the Russias speaks, everyone must be silent."

Liszt's piano music includes two brilliant concertos and several less ambitious, though hardly less brilliant, works for piano and orchestra. It also includes the great B-minor Sonata in 1853, thereby (it is thought) giving Wagner ready-made the grandiose "Treaty" motive in *Der Ring des Nibelungen*; innumerable small pieces, many sentimental tear-jerkers but others attractive genre pieces based on his travels in Italy and Switzerland; an important series of technical works, the *Etudes d'exécution transcendante*, that still define the limits of romantic piano-playing; a grand series of Rhapsodies based on Hungarian (actually Gypsy) folk music; and a huge number of transcriptions of the works of others, spanning the immense distance from horridly showy transcriptions based on inferior operas, to the Beethoven symphonies, keyboard works of Bach and Schubert, some of the jewels of the *Lieder* of Schubert and Schumann, and the greatest works for the lyric stage, including operas of Mozart, Verdi, and Wagner. In his original works, his harmonic idiom, at its most distinctive, ranged from a sentimental salon romanticism to a wayward chromaticism that foreshadowed Schoenberg and later developments in the twentieth century; in his transcriptions he could be either remarkably faithful to the composer's own intentions or, at other times—perhaps when the music he was transcribing was of a lower order—remarkably unfaithful, feeling free to throw in all manner of the pianistic *rodomontade*.

Because I was trained as a pianist, I had occasion to play a great deal of Liszt. As a child, I naturally lacked the facility, hand-size, and endurance to play such taxing music: indeed, I remember with some embarrassment playing for the famous impresario Sol Hurok when I was twelve and being utterly nonplused when the great man, having patiently sat through the Bach and Mozart I had played for him, asked "Where's his Liszt?" (or rather, in Hurok's guttural and fractured Russian-Yiddish Eng-

2 My own favorite of the many descriptions of Liszt's playing, artless though it may be, is that contained in *Music-Study in Germany* (1880), the classic memoir by the American piano student Amy Fay. She studied with other, less well-known but nonetheless important pianists before finally going to Liszt; underneath her gosh-gee-whiz style is a hardheaded Yankee assessment of artistic greatness.

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lish, "Ver's his Lits?"). Neither my teacher nor I had an answer. But I at least knew that something was wrong. When I changed teachers two years later, I began to play Liszt in earnest. In the next thirty years of my active piano career I played some forty works by Liszt, including works with orchestra, the Sonata, the Mephisto-Waltz, several difficult Etudes, some Hungarian Rhapsodies, and several transcriptions from Schubert and Verdi. I adored the Sonata, which still seems to me a summit of the art of the nineteenth century. I also loved (and often played) the marvelous Variations in F minor on the "Crucifixus" from the Bach B-minor Mass.[3]

My own playing experience of Liszt was that his was the quintessential music for the piano: he made the instrument sing, he made it dance, and he made it roar. I always enjoy hearing Liszt in concert much more than on records made today: Liszt on these spliced and acoustically doctored records (unlike what is to be heard on old 78s and their CD reissues) is safe, comfortable, and sure for both pianist and hearer; playing Liszt in concert is quite another, and highly risky, proposition. And so I went to the Kiss recital in a high state of expectation. To judge from her publicity material, she has received favorable notices for her Liszt project, even from the usually churlish *New York Times.* It was therefore something of a surprise—I had already found it curious that a concert containing such imposing music was taking place in the minuscule Weill Recital Hall—to find so few people in attendance. By the time the concert began, there were no more than ninety people in the hall. There was also, as I was to find out later, no reviewer present from the *Times*.

Though I had assumed from the advertisement that there would be the usual two halves to the concert, it was in fact played without pause. The concert began, as I mentioned earlier, with short pieces: transcriptions of two Schubert songs, *Das Wandern* and *Die Forelle* (both 1846), *Resignazione* (1877), the *Carrousel de Madame*[4] and the *Toccata* (both 1865–1881), the *Impromptu* (1872), and an incompletely identified *Rákoczy March*, which according to the program was first performed by Liszt in 1839. As always, the Schubert transcriptions seemed like beautiful music clothed in curious but not unattractive garments. The vocal line as well as the accompaniment is played by the piano, and the loss of the text and the characteristic sound of the German words seems just a bit like a circus trick. The three short pieces that followed were not particularly interesting examples of salon Liszt. Their effort to evoke the atmosphere of the gilded life of the mid-nineteenth century requires the services of a great artist to make us forget the associations of fashionable ladies' gowns. And the *Rákoczy March*, in whatever form it is played, has always impressed me as a piece of tinselled braggadocio, containing neither important musical content nor virtuoso interest.

I found Miss Kiss's playing of these pieces solid, rich-toned, and thoroughly professional. I missed, however, any real technical sparkle, and in particular I found lacking the most important element in Liszt (and Chopin!) playing: the fluttering rapidity of touch known in Italian as *leggerezza*—"lightness"—and in French as *jeu perlé*—"pearly playing." Furthermore, her melodic playing was marked by that ubiquitous stigma of contemporary piano-playing, the tendency to stop before every melodic climax and harmonic resolution. I must say, too, that her use of the sustaining pedal—called correctly "the soul of the piano"—was often sloppy and caused too much unclarity in the tiny but resonant Weill Hall.

3 But tastes in these matters differ. When, at the age of sixteen, I played these Variations for Arthur Rubinstein, his only comment was that when he heard me play them he had the same feeling he would have if he saw his brother coming out of a bar drunk: if he (Rubinstein) had gotten drunk, he would have enjoyed it, but in his brother he thought it was a disgraceful act.

4 My *Grove Dictionary* (1980) gives the full title of this piece as *Carousel de Mme Pelet-Narbonne*.

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Thus, my initial impression of Miss Kiss's playing was rather negative. Imagine my surprise, then, when from the opening massive chords of the *Eroica* I realized that I was about to hear a stunning performance by a pianist in full control of all the qualities necessary to bring off a Herculean task. With the exception of a single awkward left-hand passage in the *scherzo* that forced her to slow down, Miss Kiss had every technical problem solved. She faced Liszt's challenges of octaves, chords, and tremolos, all at terrific speed and all requiring great endurance, and faced them down. Because the *Eroica* is not a light piece, she had no need of the *leggerezza* she lacked earlier in the concert; it is not too much to say that she grappled with great music greatly.

If I say that I did not agree with every detail of Miss Kiss's conception, it is to pay her the great compliment of saying that she had a conception—something that few conductors (even famous ones) can manage today. She conveyed her musical conception with only the piano keys—and the pedal—at her disposal. Unlike Toscanini's frighteningly black-and-white conception, hers emphasized the lyricism of Beethoven's melodies, the fullness of his chords, and the richness of his harmonies. It was a romantic conception of the symphony, one that gave much pure musical pleasure to the listener. All in all, her *Eroica* reminded me of the majesty and songfulness of the first movement of Beethoven's Sonata in B-flat major, opus 106, the *Hammerklavier*.

To my taste, Miss Kiss's conception of the *Eroica* was a bit too rounded, a bit too beautiful. Though she had fortunately given up her tendency to stop just before important melodic and harmonic arrival points, she now tended to soften contrasts and to mitigate the effect of Beethoven's harsh tragedy. She often failed to keep up Beethoven's dynamic indications of *forte* and *piano* for their full duration, thus softening the impact of the subsequent *piano* and *forte* sections. In the *Funeral March*—a piece that Beethoven wrote to mourn his dashed hopes in Napoleon as the liberator of Europe—Miss Kiss ignored Liszt's instructions at the opening (and then again when the passage recurred later in the movement) to play the chords supporting the melody staccato; instead she used the pedal to sustain them for half of each bar. I do not want the reader to think that I am accusing Miss Kiss of disrespect for Beethoven's instructions, for what she did was to follow exactly the composer's instructions in the orchestral score to sustain the chords. But I would suggest that Liszt knew what he was doing in altering Beethoven's instructions, one of the few occasions in this transcription when he did so: the effect of Liszt's markings is to increase the awe-inspiring sadness and loneliness that he correctly divined as necessary to fulfill on the piano Beethoven's true innermost intentions.

Then again, at the beginning of the immensely difficult *scherzo*, Miss Kiss took too fast a tempo in the chords (as she did when they appeared later) to allow the following of Liszt's (and Beethoven's) instructions of *sempre pianissimo e staccato*—"always very soft and completely detached." Furthermore, she pedaled through the chords, rendering them muddy. Nevertheless, it must be said in her defense that these passages, so fundamental in determining the evanescent character of the movement, are very likely unplayable on the modern stiff-actioned piano, if indeed they were playable on Liszt's much lighter pianos by anyone but Liszt himself.

I do not want to leave Miss Kiss's *Eroica* on anything like a negative note. Her achievement in playing this transcription was nothing less than stunning. It deserves recognition as a kind of remarkable technical and musical piano-playing that is all too rare today. There are, it is true, modern recordings of the Liszt transcription of the *Eroica*; I have purposely not listened to them because I suspect that they are the product of technological wizardry rather than virtuoso technique: manipulating recording tape can cover a multitude of sins.[5] What made Miss

5 I include in this stricture the recording made by Glenn Gould some twenty years ago of the rather

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Kiss's playing of the *Eroica* so stunning was that it was live.

There is more involved in my discussion of the Kiss recital than a mere consideration of how she played, and what kind of pianist she proved to be. I was sadly impressed by how few people were in the audience, and by the lack of critical coverage—or for that matter of advance publicity—that attended her concert. Of course the little interest her playing aroused is not just a factor of Miss Kiss's relative obscurity; the very rarity and immensity of her task might have been thought to guarantee it attention, at least from the large number of adults in the New York City area who have seriously taken piano lessons. What, then, caused her appearance to take place in a virtual vacuum?

The answer, it seems to me, splits into two related parts. The first involves the decline of the piano both as a musical force and as a drawer of concert audiences and serious amateur musicians. The second concerns the fate of Franz Liszt as a composer. So far as the piano is concerned, it is likely that we will never again see the deeply Lisztian attitude that the Italian composer and virtuoso pianist Ferruccio Busoni promulgated in the introduction to his great Bach Edition (1915), when he called the great line stretching from the organ and the harpsichord to the piano "the keyboard, that discredited, indispensable, and most comprehensive of all instruments." Discredited, because by the turn of the century the movement for performance on original instruments had already begun; indispensable, because so much great music had been written for it; and comprehensive because all music (as in Liszt's transcriptions) could be played on it.

But for Busoni, as for Liszt, the physical conquest of the piano keyboard was a high artistic calling. Piano-playing, like any worthwhile human task, takes immense effort, dedication, and even sacrifice; once a proper standard has been reached, that standard must be maintained, an activity that requires just as much effort as acquiring the skill in the first place. Of course the criteria for success in piano-playing are different from the criteria for success in listening: though I do not believe that fruitful music listening requires a simultaneous exposure to musicological-historical pedantry, it seems to me evident that music is not learned simply by listening to concerts or records, by letting others do the work of playing. It is surely virtuous to listen to great music in concerts and on records, but without an attitude of respect and even reverence, such listening is but casual entertainment.

It is often said that classical music now lives only on the periphery of culture. It would be more true to say, however, that it is culture—that is to say, high culture—that lives only on the margins of what many people now regard as mainstream cultural life. In one sense, the future of classical music is probably secure, for great music, like all great art, is its own reality, and reality endures. In the short term, however, music, like all high culture, is in danger: from the neglect of its masterpieces as well as from the mindless popularization of its relatively trivial components. Perhaps all that we can hope for under present circumstances is that changes in this situation, when they come, will come in small but precious increments that will contribute to the education and enlightenment of a new generation. Christina Kiss's stunning playing of the *Eroica* is a welcome reminder that such contributions are already with us.

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less difficult Liszt transcription of the Beethoven Fifth Symphony. Gould openly boasted of his ability to achieve spectacular effects on recordings that were impossible in live performance. Regarding tape manipulation, there is a wonderful anecdote told of the conductor Artur Rodzinski. It seems that Rodzinski had recorded a concerto with a much-recorded but technically insufficient pianist. The recording had required much splicing to correct mistakes. As Rodzinski and the pianist were listening to the final edited version of the tape, the pianist could not control his enthusiasm for the remarkable piano-playing—his—that he was hearing; Rodzinski simply but tellingly remarked, "Don't you wish you could play that well?"

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Art

Snyder's earth, Freud's skin

by Jed Perl

When I look at a painting by Joan Snyder, I find that I'm immediately in the midst of things, and I enjoy letting the hurly-burly get to me. Snyder's impastoed paint and scrawled words and collaged found objects aren't ends but means, the means to express her belief that in art too much may be just enough. In Snyder's work too-muchness is a value, a principle. When Snyder presents what amounts to an artist's version of everything the world contains, she means to evoke sensations of confusion, exhilaration, catharsis. This is an Expressionist vision, but even if certain of Snyder's works are about wallowing in feeling, she herself keeps a remarkably clear head. In the small retrospective of Snyder's work that was at the Allentown Art Museum in the fall and early winter, Snyder came through as the thinking person's Expressionist.[1] It is the pictorial control that she exerts that allows a viewer to let go.

Sarah Anne McNear, the Associate Curator at the Allentown Art Museum, called this thematic mid-career retrospective "Works with Paper." (Snyder is fifty-three.) Among the fifty-eight works included were a couple of big paintings and many smaller works, the majority of them on paper. Snyder frequently includes collage elements in her pictures, among them pieces of paper, and this was a part of what McNear was alluding to in the show's perhaps too catchy title. The show offered a process-oriented approach to Snyder's work. There is the process of collaging elements together. And there is the fact that writing, which one of course generally does on paper, is an element in Snyder's work—in her paintings as well as her prints and drawings. McNear views Snyder's inclusion of words, phrases, and even sentences in many of her images as providing an on-the-spot explication of what she's thinking about while she's working. This approach to Snyder's work is not the one that I would have chosen, because to my mind the strongest of Snyder's works are rarely the ones with words and are by no means necessarily the ones that contain a lot of collage. The show included no painting that I would count among Snyder's finest —none of the *Fields*, none of the recent compositions with oval forms—and yet it was an important event. I was interested to see a show that emphasized what is for me a less compelling side of this artist's work and yet demonstrated what a compelling artist she is. So far as I am concerned, "Works with Paper" did what a mid-career retrospective ought to do: it gave a visitor the opportunity to judge an artist's depth of vision and ability to develop.

The arrangement of the show, in one large

1 "Joan Snyder: Works with Paper" was on view at the Allentown Art Museum, Allentown, Pennsylvania, from October 8, 1993, through January 2, 1994. A catalogue, with an essay by Sarah Anne McNear, has been published by the museum (56 pages, $16 paper).

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room with a number of temporary partitions, may not have been optimal, but it did make for an eye-filling experience. Although the exhibition was basically organized chronologically, in a counterclockwise movement around the one big room, the experience of being able to take in work from the early Seventies to the early Nineties with one turn of the head had the effect of underlining the consistency of Snyder's concerns. Nonetheless, McNear's thesis, which is an attempt to grasp the nature of Snyder's imagination, was in general easier to demonstrate in Snyder's earlier work. In these compositions, which date from the first half of the Seventies, when she was in her early thirties, Snyder's self-conscious didacticism isn't exactly cloying but does leave one with the feeling that the artist is answering her own questions a little too quickly and easily. Snyder draws a regular grid on the page and then jots notations over and around the grid, notations that point up the perfectly obvious limitations of absolute regularity. (It doesn't take a large mind to show what's wrong with Carl Andre-style Minimalism.) Inscribed on one grid drawing are the words "The illusion/ the Reality/ the Stroke," followed by some thick dark-red strokes of paint. In the same drawing more red words —"Guts of/ Depth/ Debris"—are inscribed in a purple circle. I can believe that these observations are heartfelt, but the reason I can believe this is not because Snyder says so but because when Snyder puts the words aside and paints, the strokes create an Illusion that is a Reality and there's nothing more that needs to be said.

The strongest of the earlier works in the show was a small triptych, *Small Symphony for Women* (1974). The left panel is full of writing, while in the middle and right-hand panels there is very little writing and a lot of painting. In the wordy panel Snyder wonders, "Can I make symphonies out of this subject?" She includes ruminations on the emergence of "a female sensibility language art," a list of names of colors, and phrases that suggest possible motifs or metaphors (among them "landscape space" and "letters/ marks"). Snyder has a convincingly casual calligraphic writing style, and the left panel of the triptych doesn't look terrible, but when I turn my attention to the middle and right panels, where Snyder shows what a terrific painter she is, well, it's as if I've put down the playbill and the music has begun and I don't really care about whatever program the music was supposed to have to begin with. In those two panels Snyder sheds the self-consciousness of her wordplay in favor of some wonderful visual noise: those extravagant color combos, those jarring juxtapositions of rectangular shapes, thick brushstrokes, scratched pictograms. I do not doubt that the text is important to Snyder as a painter, but as a viewer I have the right to decide what is important to me. The writing, with its self-reflexive braininess, reminds me somewhat of the work that David Hockney did in the Sixties; these are two extremely gifted, intelligent artists who are setting themselves goals that make too little of their gifts. The written remarks put the artist in the position of a fairly well-informed commentator on the work, and it's simply not an interesting situation. The trajectory of Snyder's career may suggest that she is not exactly in disagreement with this assessment. Many of the more recent works in the show that include a lot of words are in fact preparatory drawings from her own collection, in which the notations are merely notations—jottings along the way. And where words are included in the later finished works, they are often not so much the reflections of an artist at work as they are conclusions, flat-out statements. Snyder's most recent one-person show in New York, at Hirschl & Adler Modern last season, contained, if I am remembering correctly, no words whatsoever.

McNear does tend to draw red circles around the obvious things, but hers is an honorable approach, and all the wondering about how Joan Snyder does what she does has its pay-off, even if it is not exactly the one that McNear intends. In Snyder's work the guiding metaphor isn't to be discovered by looking at the artist's preoccupation with

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language or collage but by looking at her preoccupation with earth. For Snyder, a painting is the world upended, planet earth hanging on the wall. The texture of the earth is a big part of Snyder's work—gravelly textures, gritty textures, sandy textures, muddy textures. Earth colors often dominate. And much of Snyder's best work is pastoral—it's about the changes that the seasons bring and all the things that grow out of the ground. For Snyder, a painting is a plot of ground, and the painter puts something into the earth and trusts that it will come out as something else. Seeds become plants. And more relevant to Joan Snyder: throwaways become fertilizers. When Fernand Léger was in America in the 1940s, he was fascinated by an abandoned farm in Upstate New York, where the old machinery that in France would have been carefully repaired or recycled was simply left to rust in the fields. Out of the experience came a series of *Waste* paintings. Joan Snyder has actually incorporated pieces of rusty metal in her paintings; she regards painting as an ecological process. Even her grids are not so much geometric as they are agrarian—furrows in a field. For Snyder a painter is a gardener, a farmer.

In the Snyder show we see the most unlikely elements going into paintings, and although they do not necessarily immediately enrich the work, we can see how, over time, they reappear in unexpected forms. *Resurrection*, the huge mixed-media painting from 1977 that was the centerpiece of the Allentown show, is a failure, yet I do not doubt that it was an important step in Snyder's growth as an artist. Here Snyder's main subject is the sexual abuse and murder of women, and the eight-panel, 78-by-312 inch painting, which reads from left to right, traces a development from tabloid-banal cruelty to out-of-this-world epiphany. There are beautiful passages of collage in the lighter areas to the right, but Snyder doesn't even have a hope of holding together this huge picture. There's no guiding rhythm. The collage of newspaper clippings of photographs of rape victims doesn't have much impact. This section is visual static, not the torn-from-daily-life chiaroscuro that is probably intended; and the three-dimensional effects that Snyder achieves with the use of papier-mâché are tricky and arbitrary. The painting is overblown and murky. There is nothing facile about Snyder's work here, it's just terribly unresolved. The full-out emotion of *Resurrection* needed to be plowed deeper into Snyder's painting, and this is what she did, and her themes were reborn in the *Field* paintings of the Eighties. Like many a gifted artist who attempts the visual equivalent to grand opera, Snyder has had her greatest successes with one-movement symphonies, art songs, and chamber music.

A group of monoprints from the past couple of years provided a visitor to Allentown with the best opportunity to see what has become of the the dark-and-light drama of *Resurrection*. Snyder is a considerable monoprintist—certainly the best at work today. In these works on paper Snyder does not so much develop new themes as she reprises some motifs of ponds, fields, female nudes, motifs which she originally developed in paint on canvas and which were not otherwise represented in the Allentown show. This half-painting, half-drawing medium of the monoprint works perfectly for Snyder, because it gives her a way to create pictures on paper that have some of the sense of depth that she gets with paint. In monoprint, the artist works with paint or printer's ink on a hard smooth surface and then paper is pressed onto the surface to make a unique print. (Sometimes more than one impression is taken from the same plate, and sometimes the plate is reworked between impressions.) Snyder is at ease here, and the full range of her gifts as a colorist comes into play. There are sharp, almost shrill combinations of yellow, green, and red; there are brown-blue-purple-black arrangements that are warm and sonorous. One feels Snyder's romantic engagement with the materials; she brings to these elegant pastoral images some of the heedless immediacy of a kid who's up to her elbows in fingerpaint. Exactly how important paint

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is to Snyder becomes very clear when one turns from the monoprints to the drawings, where Snyder's work is formulaic and pedestrian. Her drawings are at best functional; she needs the depth of paint to bring out her gift for nuance and shading. That this artist who paints so much better than she draws should be given a show that emphasizes the act of working on paper is the conundrum at the heart of Sarah Anne McNear's enterprise. My guess is that McNear has accepted the rather conventional idea that intelligent artists think graphically before they think pictorially, but this is at best a questionable thesis and it certainly has nothing to do with Joan Snyder.

These were some of the things that came to mind while I was in Allentown. "In *Allentown?*" was the vaguely quizzical reaction that I got when I told friends that I was going to see a Joan Snyder show. The Allentown Museum is modest but does contain a small permanent collection of nineteenth- and twentieth-century American art that is not negligible. There is a powerful, somewhat primitive painting of the *Montgomery County Almshouse* by one Charles Hofmann (1874), a good figure study by Thomas Anschutz, a room from a Frank Lloyd Wright house. Some years ago, Snyder lived on a farm in Martins Creek, Pennsylvania, which is not all that far from Allentown, and the local connection was a factor in encouraging the museum to undertake this show. It's a considerable achievement, one that requires no regional justification. As I am often depressed by going to museums around the country and finding that what's shown in the way of contemporary art represents New York's worst, I got a lift out of visiting this out-of-the-way small museum where the big foray into the contemporary art scene focused on something first-rate. I have a different take on Snyder, but McNear's emphasis on words and process probably gave the Allentown audience a relatively easy way to approach the work. McNear's wall labels were clear, level-headed, illuminating. In the 1930s some New Yorkers thought nothing of going up to the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford to get the news about contemporary art. One goes where the news is. Why not Allentown?

"Painter Lucian Freud: will his spirit define the century?" was the tag line floating just over Nastassja Kinski's collarbone on the cover of the December issue of *Interview*. The very brief conversation with the artist included inside didn't even attempt to answer the question, but in *Interview* questions aren't asked in order to receive answers, and probably for the *Interview* audience, which isn't as young as it used to be, the most interesting thing about the portfolio-style feature on Lucian Freud was the self-portrait of the artist at seventy-one, which proves that he still looks pretty good without anything on. The nude self-portrait, a painting completed last year, hangs at the end of the Freud retrospective that is currently at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.[2] This show, which focuses on work from the past ten years, has brought a new level of fame to Lucian Freud. He's being talked about by people who've never heard of him before, and those who've known about him forever are wondering how exactly he arrived where he now is. Freud, who is a grandson of Sigmund by his architect son Ernst, has been a figure in high-bohemian life in Europe practically since he was a child. The rather astonishing upswing in his reputation cannot but be helped by his having a wide circle of friends who are now in strategic positions across the cultural landscape. But why is all this happening for Freud right now? The

2 "Lucian Freud: Recent Work" opened at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, on December 16, 1993, and is on view through March 13, 1994. The exhibition was organized by the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, where it was seen last fall (September 10–November 21, 1993); it will travel to the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid (April 6–June 13, 1994). A catalogue, with an essay by Catherine Lampert, has been published by the Whitechapel Art Gallery and Rizzoli (192 pages, $50; $35 paper).

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death of Francis Bacon (whom Freud knew for decades) probably has something to do with it. Freud is slipping into the Bacon role of bad boy as old master. The show that's at the Met was organized by Catherine Lampert at the Whitechapel Gallery in London, and arrives here with some changes, mostly involving the addition of a group of earlier works. At least three New York galleries have organized exhibitions of Freud's work to complement the Metropolitan show: early works at Robert Miller, recent drawings and etchings at Matthew Marks, and more etchings at Stiebel Modern.

While Freud has painted some cityscapes and still lifes, he makes his appeal to the audience as a painter of people, most of whom, especially in recent years, he has painted without anything on. The setting is Freud's equally bare London studio, a room or series of rooms (it's hard to tell) where there are a few chairs and beds to pose on and some five-foot-high piles of paint rags. The props are not distinguished in any way, which serves to underline the idea that Freud cares not for the figure in an interior but for the figure itself. Composition, which is about relating one thing to another thing, is not one of Freud's concerns. Freud doesn't consider the figure as a volume that occupies space, he considers it as a terrain that he translates into two-dimensional terms. He's like a mapmaker who turns the concavities and convexities of the body into a typographical diagram in which height, depth, and angle of incline are indicated by different colors and textures. Going through the show at the Met, I quickly lose the sense of bodies and find that all that I'm conscious of are body parts: jutting knees, splayed fingers, limp penises (which Freud likes to place at the center of the canvas—this is his idea of composition). A few of these paintings are moderately interesting for their close-up view of human flesh, but in a big show such as this one (or the one that came to the Hirshhorn in Washington, D.C., in the late Eighties) Freud's inability to relate parts of the body to one another or to the space around them results in visual confusion and everything cancels out. Freud's paint-handling is no help, either. As the years have gone by he has painted thicker and allowed the brushstrokes to show more and more, but the brushwork and the build-up of paint don't clarify the form. The most elementary mechanics of placing things in space are beyond Freud: floor planes rise up so that they seem to float in front of a bed or a chair that's actually resting on the floor; in a number of cases it's impossible to tell if a figure is being painted standing up or lying down. Of course people will say that this is Freud's modernist ambiguity, but the ambiguities do not appear to be in his control. *Two Men* (1987-88) is a work with a striking theme. Two men are reclining on a bed. One is naked, lying on his stomach; the other, fully clothed, is lying on his back, with one hand resting affectionately on the naked man's leg. Freud achieves a cool erotic atmosphere in this essay on the dressed and the undressed, but as a painting it is marred by the artist's inability to place the figures clearly next to each other, so much so that I can't tell if the clothed man's right shoulder is resting on or adjacent to the naked man's right thigh. In spite of all Freud's plodding attention to detail, his work is weightless stuff. The American painter Leland Bell once said of the paintings of Corot, "It's not the tint that is important, but the weight of the tint." Freud's colors have no weight; his browns and grays and tans all have the same value, the same impact. His paintings are numbingly even—nothing is accented, there is no particular emphasis.

If one gave much thought to every wacko thing that was said about contemporary art, there wouldn't be time left in the day to make a cup of coffee, much less get a few hours sleep. But the P.R. about Lucian Freud is couched in such impressively tradition-conscious terms, I can't help wondering how wacko has been carried into this new dimension of traditionalist chic. There is no doubt that Lucian Freud has put in many hours in the studio looking at the model, and some of his work has a hardbitten, unabashedly prosaic character that I can under-

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stand some viewers credit with a banal-poetic force. But to compare him to Velázquez—as John Richardson has in *The New Yorker*, and he is only one among many to do so—is to misconstrue Freud's small virtues in an effort to ascribe to him large virtues that are not only beyond his grasp but have nothing to do with what he is trying to do. Lucian Freud is an artist who even at his best can only get the small things right in a figure painting—a vein in an arm, a crease in the flesh. Yet Catherine Lampert (in her catalogue essay) can write that "Freud's work will leave to posterity the vulnerability and potency of the people portrayed"—a characterization that leads her straight to Rembrandt, the seventeenth-century artist who, along with Velázquez, is brought in for comparison in this essay that is an exercise in wishful thinking.

The genius of Velázquez and Rembrandt has to do with their ability to re-create the layered magic of perception. When we look at the great portraits by these artists we feel that we're seeing big things and small things simultaneously—we feel the weight and force of the figure as mass that displaces air as it moves, and we're also conscious of the smallest nuances of gesture and expression. The simultaneous experience of big things and small things creates a shiver, a breath of life. That's the bewitching verisimilitude of the immortal seventeenth-century portrait paintings. What does any of this have to do with the ponderous flesh that Freud paints? Yet the main difference that Lampert will acknowledge between Rembrandt's and Freud's ability to capture "vulnerability and potency" is a matter of dress. She believes that because Freud's figures are so often painted without anything on, they are "unshackled . . . by the privileges and burdens of traditional society with expectations attached to roles, relative wealth, age and decorum." But hasn't it occured to Catherine Lampert that Freud's sitters take a particular kind of contemporary role when they take everything off? Some of Freud's figures may be even more socially privileged than some of Rembrandt's, and in any event later in the essay Lampert seems to approach a more standard view of Rembrandt and Velázquez, which would locate their genius in their ability to paint their figures in a way that transcends the social situation. I can't imagine what else Lampert could have in mind when she writes that "the nearest comparison in art to Freud's life in the London studio is Velázquez and his court of Philip IV." Immediately after this she quotes Freud: "I believe in Velázquez more completely than any other artist whose work is alive for me. I understand Ortega y Gasset's strange remark on first seeing *Las Meninas*: 'This isn't art, it's life perpetuated.'" Lucian Freud is no doubt an intelligent man with some very good taste, but liking Velázquez isn't really proof of much of anything. Lots of people like Velázquez.

To the audience of the Metropolitan Museum, Lucian Freud is an ambassador from an unfamiliar world, and this is no doubt a part of his attraction. The stark London studio is new to people, and for all of its ordinariness it is also somehow mysterious. While contemporary art does not in general travel all that well from country to country, in certain cases an artist's otherness can be an advantage. To American eyes English ennui can look exotic. In America the old idols among the Abstract Expressionists and the Pop Artists interest people far less than they care to admit, but the recognition that one must make a revolution within tradition, a recognition that ought to come to every new generation, is blocked by a culture in which all revolutions are imagined as being against tradition. The result is that pressures build and nutty solutions proliferate. Freud's paintings would probably not be anywhere near so popular if it were not for their in-your-face subject matter. But Freud's popularity also has a lot to do with the anti-modern appeal that he makes to an audience that is increasingly uncomfortable with the abstractness of all modern art (an abstractness that one encounters even in the paintings of Balthus and Giacometti). There's a good dose of English philistinism in Lucian Freud, who would like to dismiss the dif-

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ficulties of modern art in favor of some old-fashioned hard work in the studio with the model. The exhibition of Freud's earlier work that was mounted at the Robert Miller Gallery to run concurrently with the Metropolitan show underlined his debt to the English Neo-Romanticism of the 1940s; his work also owes something to the artists of the Euston Road School, especially William Coldstream, with his emphasis on dispassionate observation. English critics may think an American is getting the connections garbled by observing that Freud owes something to both the romantics and the realists, but many of these artists shared if not a general distrust of or skepticism about modern art, then a desire to get beyond the formalism of modern art. They were nostalgic for an English art untainted by the icy, abstract intelligence of France. (Constable, the great ancestor, was both romantic and realist.) The appeal of postwar English art isn't all that mysterious. Many of us have some of that yearning for cozy antimodern values. There's a kind of painting that owes its distinctive poetic character to its formal failings, and the muddled realism of an artist such as John Minton, a friend of Freud's in the postwar years, is most interesting when understood as reflecting the realist's predicament in an age of abstraction. (To be a realist in the twentieth century is always to be a kind of romantic.) Freud arrives in New York with all this baggage of the English ambivalence about modernism, and his work strikes with the force of a revelation among New Yorkers who no longer know what to think about modern art.

The catalogue of the Miller show, which is done with this gallery's characteristic typographical elegance, is the most interesting item to appear during what has become Lucian Freud's New York season. (At dinner parties the two cultural topics are Lucian Freud and Steven Spielberg's Holocaust movie, *Schindler's List*.) The Miller catalogue contains texts by five people, including the novelist Caroline Blackwood (to whom Freud was once married), the painter Anne Dunn, someone identified only as "an Old Friend," and the critics John Russell and Robert Hughes. Taken together, these five texts compose a novella-in-different-voices about the Englishman who was young, beautiful, and brilliant in the Soho of the 1940s and the Paris of the 1950s, who drank with Francis Bacon, dined with the Vicomtesse de Noailles, and all the rest of it. It was the twilight of the modern adventure, and Freud was there. That's the point. Freud's work is now being hailed as art after modern art, but no painter who brought about an artistic revolution ever painted with so little comprehension of the principles that he sought to overturn. In this pocket-sized catalogue the Robert Miller Gallery takes us to the heart of the Freud mystique. They've done the job with laser precision; they do not prevaricate about fashion. I'm quite certain that the organizers of the exhibition at the Robert Miller Gallery admire Lucian Freud's work, and yet they've given us the last word on the subject by publishing a catalogue that contains not a single reproduction of a work of art. The only image is a photograph of the artist as the strikingly handsome fellow that Anne Dunn refers to in her text as Gabriel or Lucifer—"A firefly in the fog of a drab and exhausted post-war London." Lucian Freud exerts an interest that has very little to do with his paintings. He's a celebrity for intellectuals. He's taken it all off and people still don't feel that they've seen enough of him.

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Theater

Words at play

by Donald Lyons

Pleasures that are short and smart and coarse are rare. *All in the Timing* is the collective name for six brief plays by David Ives that are currently being performed at Primary Stages, a company devoted to the production of new American plays by new American playwrights. These six works, composed from 1987 to 1993, are to recent theater as a fresh, salty, offshore breeze after a humid August day. Best simply to describe them.

The first, "Sure Thing," has been called Ives's signature piece. A man approaches a café table where a woman is sitting and reading a book. He asks, "Is this seat taken?" She says yes. A bell rings. The conversation is repeated, but this time she hedges. Bell. This time she says no. The guy asks what she's reading. It's *The Sound and the Fury*. "Hemingway, I hear it's great, Paris . . ." he ventures. Bell. "Faulkner," he essays. As they converse, interrupted by those back-to-starting-gate bells, he edits his biography upmarket. In a hilarious monologue, she predicts the course of their as-yet-unborn relationship, including the day that he will get out of bed after sex to fetch himself but not her a bottle of beer and belatedly tell her he is already involved with a woman called Stephanie. He invites her out, in order, he charmingly says, to let Faulkner have a rest from his long, exhausting sentences. "Sure Thing" uncovers an Ivesland where time can be rewound to erase mistakes, to edit personality, to construct language, to enable romance—which is all the same endeavor.

In "Variations on the Death of Trotsky," the Russian sits at his desk in Mexico with a mountain climber's axe embedded in his head and tries to make sense, to make history, out of this awkward circumstance. His wife reads to him from a future encyclopedia that tells of how their gardener, Ramon, has buried an ice pick in his skull. "Will the capitalist press never get things right?" rants the Red, pointing out the difference between an axe and an ice pick and between *buried* and *smashed*. As in "Sure Thing," a bell signals opportunity to enact alternate realities: Trotsky trickily tries to outsmart destiny ("only a capitalist word for the status quo") by hauling a skull out of a drawer in the hope that the assassin will mistake it for "Trotsky's skull." Mrs. Trotsky ventures some apotropaic comic interpretations of events: the assassin may be "hot to Trotsky" or to "pick your brains." In one alternative scenario, she and Ramon are lovers, dance the tango, and plot to do in Trotsky as a husbandly nuisance out of James Cain. The play is about the characters' strategies to wiggle, by power of the imagination, out of the grip of the written word. It is Abbott and Costello meet *Appointment in Samarra*. Toward the end, Ives flirts with sentimentality as the axed Bolshevik muses on the things he'll miss by dying early: *Casablanca* ("I would have hated it anyway"), Hiroshima, rock-'n'-roll, Gorbachev, Israel. But Ives's imagination is happiest in pure solution, not,

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that is, when tied to earth by the complicating contingencies of real people.

In "The Philadelphia" we are snugly back in fictive time warps. Al finds himself constantly frustrated in life's little things like finding aspirin in a drugstore until a friend explains that Al is "in a Philadelphia," that is, in a black hole in reality where "no matter what you ask for you can't get it." The friend is in an antithetical warp of bliss called a Los Angeles, a "cosmic beach" wherein all is soft and sexy and profitable. These states are temporary and highly labile. The play is set in a restaurant and its stop-start action revolves around the tactics of ordering food while inside a Philadelphia. To get the waitress, affect indifference; to get a hamburger, ask about the calf's brains with okra. It is very funny and it is far more difficult than it looks. To attach city labels to psychic states is, perhaps, routinely clever, but Ives constructs perfect little dramatic shapes for his conceits to wear—and that is hard.

In a way, the simplest of the six plays is "Philip Glass Buys a Loaf of Bread." The piece is parody, and well aimed. Spasmodic jerks and verbal tics overcome the people in a bakery—two star-struck customers, the baker, and Glass. "Is that him?" and "I want a loaf" are repeated endlessly, stutteringly, fracturedly. A fog-filled blue rectangle is meaninglessly revealed and, for a bit, swallows up the characters. A big clock and a neon sign ambivalently reading NO CHANGE hang aloft. Glass dreamily and pointlessly recalls a woman in a white dress lying at the end of a jetty; he mistook her for a rowboat. This miniature drama is a silver bullet to the heart of much recent pretentious attitudinizing. It lacks only a companion piece to be called "Robert Wilson Sits Down in a Chair."

If in these four plays people are allowed to manipulate time like clay, the two best Ives efforts are uninterrupted, unrewound narratives. In "Words, Words, Words," three monkeys named Swift, Kafka, and Milton have been put in a Columbia University lab supervised by an unseen Dr. David Rosenbaum; their task is to type randomly until they type *Hamlet*. Before they are metaphysicians, these monkeys are monkeys. Ives relishes the vulgar, Three Stooges level of fun: they eat their own cooties, enjoy bananas and peanuts, swing on a tire, masturbate, smoke cigarettes lowered into the cage as reward stimulus, and play monkey-see. They also rise to Borgesian play. Although Swift defends their cushy imprisonment as "not a bad gig," they are largely dissatisfied with their fate. Milton types the opening lines of *Paradise Lost*, mutters about justifying the ways of Rosenbaum to apes, and longs for Africa as *his* paradise lost. Tags from *Hamlet* ("antic disposition," "more than kin and less than kind") infiltrate the conversation. Swift has a bright idea: "Forget about this random *Hamlet* crap; what about revenge?" He concocts a scheme to get Rosenbaum through poisoned typewriter keys—a scheme, of course, more insidiously evocative of *Hamlet* than the verbal tags. (There is, too, a nice tongue-twister about poison quoted from the Danny Kaye film *The Court Jester*.)

Even though you know how it's going to end, with a monkey typing out the words, "Act one, scene one, Elsinore Castle, Denmark, Enter Bernardo . . . ," the closure is delightful when it comes. The re-creation, or is it creation?, of *Hamlet* will perhaps free these likable and fortuitously literate creatures. Ives's sentiment, barely tangible here, works. With meticulous sleight of hand, the playwright has mashed bananas and entropy. I think "Words, Words, Words" is, pound for pound, a wittier footnote to *Hamlet* than Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, a play whose ponderous Beckettisms have not worn well.

"The Universal Language" takes place in a classroom. Timid pupil Dawn enters a seemingly empty room; cap-and-gowned teacher Don promptly pops out from behind a blackboard. Dawn is responding to an ad offering instruction in Unamunda, a new universal language; a silken banner announcing it unrolls from the ceiling. Don, following the Berlitz principle, speaks only in that language, which, it soon becomes

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clear, is an ad hoc improvisation of nonsense phrases derived from Don's ability to pun. Possessed and jerky, Don invents the vocabulary in the course of acting it out. "Dance" is in his head one minute and so the word for "room" is *rhumba*; "walls" are *waltz*; "door" is *isadora*; "chairs" are *cha cha cha*. If "food" is on his tongue, the word for "language" becomes *linguine*. Dawn has a stutter, causing syllables to repeat; Don's own Joycean surname, Finninninnegan, is a verbal stutter. A lot of Unamunda is just dumb: "Harvard U?" = "How are you?"; "of corset" = "of course." Celebrity names like Mel Gibson and Paula Prentiss and theater in-jokes like Long Wharf figure. The joy of Ives is not knowing whether the next joke will be a groan or a grin.

Soon their dialogue edges into the potential intelligibility of romance. They talk of *Romeo and Juliet*. But Don dips into plain English for the first time to clarify the bottom line: the price of the class is "one hundred dollars . . . cash." As the homophonic Dawn and Don go on talking, she becomes a co-creator of Unamunda, exemplifying his key dictum that "language is the opposite of loneliness." Their joint inventiveness having attained syllabically orgasmic heights, Don gets conscience-stricken, or rather tongue-stricken, saying, "I can't take your money." "What's the mattress? Porky?" "Unamunda's a fraud . . . a sigismundo freud." But by now it isn't; her sweet cooperation has made it genuine. He assents to her optimism, declaring his love ("iago arf in love") and likening their naming-frenzy to that exercised in the Garden of Eden. In the play's final tableau, the happy pair welcome a new student.

"The Universal Language," which might be called an anti-*Oleanna*, is the most romantic of these plays and also the funniest—a conjunction somehow quite Ivesian. It shows, yet again, personality and emotion and happiness as contingent products of the silly accidences and syllabic collisions of language.

Various names—Beckett, Ionesco, Pinter, Stoppard—have been mentioned in attempts to place Ives in the landscape. I think rather of two nondramatic writers: the fantastic Borges and the short prose pieces of Woody Allen. Ives, wallowing in his playpens of metamorphic time and language, seems to share *their* geniality rather than the aggressive misanthropy shared by the playwrights (I do not wish to suggest that I conflate Beckett with the others qualitatively). One now awaits larger, fuller, even more polyphonic work from Ives.

It remains to add that the Primary Stages production is masterly. Under the direction of Jason McConnell Buzas, every slightest implication of the script is brought to electric life. Bruce Goodrich's scenery, Deborah Constantine's lighting, and Sharon Lynch's costumes are also as wittily precise as the text. Among the performers, tall, gangly Robert Stanton is always leaning or sitting with intelligent, taut energy: he does Professor Don, Philip Glass, the monkey Swift, the guy in the café, and the guy in the Philadelphia. Nancy Opel has fine comic sense as the monkey Kafka, the gal in the café, and Mrs. Trotsky. And Wendy Lawless, as shy Dawn in "The Universal Language," wonderfully births a lively intelligence out of the character's naïveté.

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The media

Fornigate follies

by James Bowman

Why don't we elect journalists? Once there may have been a time when the most respectable and authoritative of them truly aspired to that chimera, "objectivity," but even then such objectivity would have been circumscribed by capitalist, ethnocentric, and patriarchal assumptions as yet unrevealed to us by the modern literary sciences. There is not much point in being even-handed and "fair" (the very idea bespeaks the ethos of sentimental, games-playing British imperialism) as between, say, Republican and Democrat if R and D are merely the Tweedledum and Tweedledee of the decadent, bourgeois, racist, patriarchal power structure. I grant all this. But the more or less unashamed advocacy that has taken the place of a hypocritical attachment to non-partisanship brings with it problems of its own. A parliament of hacks might be the only solution.

The latest illustration of the difficulty is to be found in the journalistic response to what the wags of the press have called Fornigate: the revelations published in *The American Spectator* just before Christmas about Bill Clinton's Arkansas sex life. In the interest of obsolete objectivity, I should say that I write for the *Spectator*, am a friend of its editors, and know slightly David Brock, the author of the piece that sparked the furor. But here my purpose is not just to defend Mr. Brock against his critics (no doubt I won't be able to help myself), but to examine as dispassionately as possible why he provoked such passion among them. The outpouring of vituperation was as instructive as it was in the case of Mr. Brock's earlier piece for the *Spectator* on Anita Hill—which later developed into the best-selling book *The Real Anita Hill*.

In both instances, Brock succeeded in effecting a remarkable polarization. Whether his readers focused on him—often with savage attacks on his competence, integrity, and mental health—or on the subject of his allegations could be predicted with almost 100 percent accuracy by noting the official or (more usually) unofficial party affiliations of the readers in question. It was all rather like the coincidence by which the Republicans on the Judiciary Committee of the World's Greatest Deliberative Body all believed Clarence Thomas and the Democrats all believed Anita Hill. But, unlike the accusations of Miss Hill against Justice Thomas, where there was a certain plausibility on both sides, those of the Arkansas smokies against Clinton were not seriously doubted even by the President's defenders in the press. This made their partisanship, without benefit of the party labels which accounted for it in the other case, all the more remarkable.

Even Michael Kinsley, who probably went furthest out on the limb for the President by citing some of Mr. Brock's and the troopers' more doubtful claims as evidence of "dishonesty," demurred. He admitted that he could not say that he thought all the troop-

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ers' claims were false: indeed, "probably some are true." His objections to their publication, it seems, were founded on Journalistic Standards. "Most other professional journalists," he said with remarkable innocence, would not believe a word that someone like Mr. Brock wrote because he used tainted sources (the troopers have spoken of their intention to write a book) and supposedly lacked corroboration. The obvious answer to this no doubt highly principled stand on standards was supplied by Paul Gigot in the *Wall Street Journal*'s "Potomac Watch" column: Mr. Brock had supplied far more corroboration than had ever existed in the seriously-reported stories of Gary Hart, John Tower, or Clarence Thomas.

To say nothing of the fact that the Brock story was itself a corroboration of Gennifer Flowers's claim two years ago to have had a long-running affair with Clinton. Yet the matter of "corroboration" came up again and again among Brock's critics, as if he was only repeating gossip instead of marshaling the testimony of the men who were there when the trysts were arranged. Sidney Blumenthal of *The New Yorker*, appearing on "Nightline" on December 21st, went so far as to say that "to the extent that there has been some independent inquiry into this, what we have found, for the most part, are refutations of these charges." But he did not specify either who had made the "independent inquiry" or what "refutations" that inquiry had come up with. A great pity, this, since nobody else knows anything of either. Yet it was Mr. Blumenthal who, like Mr. Kinsley and others, took it upon himself to half-deny to Mr. Brock membership in the holy fraternity of hacks: "I hesitate to call him a journalist," he said.

But even Messrs. Kinsley and Blumenthal must yield to Frank Rich as Mr. Brock's most rabid critic among his fellow journalists. Mr. Rich, who recently left his post as *The New York Times*'s chief theater critic to pontificate as an editorialist for the *Times*, had fortuitously reported in the *Times* Sunday magazine the day the story broke that he had gathered from Naomi Wolf's new book, *Fire with Fire*, certain very highbrow ideas that in his mind easily reduced to this: that Mr. Brock's reporting of the Anita Hill story suggested that he had a "castration fantasy." No doubt charmed by his own psychosexual explanation of journalistic behavior as contemptible as Mr. Brock's, Mr. Rich pursued it further, on the op-ed page of the *Times*, in connection with Fornigate. Brock's motives, he wrote,

> are at least as twisted as his facts. It's women, not liberals, who really get him going. The slightest sighting of female sexuality whips him up into a frenzy of misogynist zeal. All women are the same to Mr. Brock: terrifying, gutter-tongued sexual omnivores.

Mr. Rich apparently arrives at this remarkable generalization about David Brock's view of "all women" not through any special psychiatric expertise but through the fact that Mr. Brock has written about two women, Hillary Clinton and Anita Hill, whom he found to be rather repellent characters.

Can we detect just a hint of hypocrisy on the part of those who decry personal attacks on the President and then indulge in this kind of thing? Can we make some progress in guessing why they think Mr. Brock's personal attack is beyond the pale while theirs holds up the highest standards of journalism? Hint: it has nothing to do with the highest standards of journalism. The most interesting invocation of those standards against David Brock was made by E. J. Dionne of *The Washington Post*. Mr. Dionne is a liberal journalist with many conservative friends (including many writers for *The American Spectator*). He contrasted David Brock's treatment of Bill Clinton with his treatment of Anita Hill. Mr. Dionne professes to see in the author of *The Real Anita Hill* an admirable, "tough-minded, skeptical Brock" who was unwilling to accept unsubstantiated charges against Clarence Thomas but who now indulges in them himself against Bill Clinton.

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> The next time my conservative friends criticize the "irresponsible liberal media" or talk about "the decline of civility in American life," I'll just give them a copy of the Brock article. For years, conservatives have had great fun attacking "liberal hypocrisy," and, at least some of the time, I thought they had a point. But with the rise of Bill Clinton, conservatives seem quite willing to abandon principles they held to be sacrosanct when they were in power.

Leaving aside, for the present, the question of whether in fact, as Mr. Dionne charges, David Brock's account "elides [he means "shades"] into gossip," he has come up here with a brilliant pre-emptive retort to the charge of hypocrisy: It is not the liberals but the conservatives who are being hypocritical! They should hang their heads in shame! What has become of their "principles"? (By which is meant, presumably, a belief in public discretion about private behavior and not some notional principle according to which adultery is OK.) Dionne likes to be in the position of admiring the conservatives for their principles while he allies himself politically (perhaps *because* he allies himself politically) with those who suffer from no such encumbrances in their pursuit of power—as the treatment of John Tower or Clarence Thomas or, for that matter, David Brock bears witness. If you want to get down to business, it is useful to be able to sit on the opposite side of the house from your ideals.

E. J. Dionne's touching faith in the "principles" of the Right was in fact borne out by many of those on Mr. Brock's side of the aisle who, though more or less critical of President Clinton, devoted their comments principally to regret that the behavior Mr. Brock described should be a matter for public discussion. Even such normally severe Clinton detractors as Pat Buchanan and Paul Greenberg answered Mr. Dionne's plea for gentlemanliness on the other side: "It would be nice," Mr. Dionne wrote, "if some of the many honorable conservatives out there (Jack Kemp, Vin Weber, Henry Hyde come to mind) lectured their own side on the value of civility and suggested that beating Clinton on the merits would be far better than spreading sleazy stories about him." It would indeed be nice! I myself confess to a great deal of nostalgia for the days when the press knew but did not report "sleazy stories" about the President, or the British royal family.

I am afraid that those days are unlikely ever to come again, even though it means, as Joe Klein pointed out in *Newsweek*, that henceforth we must be governed by prigs and goody-goodies. Klein prefers—as who does not?—colorful and flamboyant leaders like Bill Clinton, men who frequent the mysterious precincts he describes as "the dusky Dunkin' Donuts of the soul." He loves a rogue, so long as the rogue is on his side. And there was an undercurrent of the same feeling in much of the partisan commentary on Fornigate—as if the writers could not quite put into words their sense that the last twenty years of rhetorical humbug about "ethics" in Washington was all owing to the fact that Republicans were dominant there. With the Democrats back in power, it looks petty and nit-picking to hound a man because his personal life required his bodyguards to put in some extra overtime.

And it is too. I'll gladly take Lyndon Johnson, who wiretapped his opponents and made the Secret Service clean the pool, over the sort of post-Watergate priggery under whose fraudulent auspices Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison has been indicted for asking a secretary to make a hair appointment for her or some such trifle. But Joe Klein's baroque tissue of mixed metaphors in tribute to Clinton's "furious gush of humanity" is one illustration of why our national obsession with "ethics" has gone too far to be recalled even by those who launched it. The more recent pursuit of the "Whitewatergate" story, which was probably undertaken more aggressively by some papers as a compensation for their squeamishness about Fornigate, is another. Journalists have become too "creative," too self-important and too much in control of the

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moral imperium to cede their right to look down their noses disapprovingly at mere politicians of either party.

In fact, in retrospect most of the moral energy generated by Fornigate seems to have been dissipated in the passionate debate over whether or not a professionally responsible press has any right to report on Bill Clinton's sexual behavior in the first place. Most of the assembly of journalistic philosophers held that it did not—unless it did (if you see what I mean), though it was unclear even from E. J. Dionne how far this could be taken as a general rule. The point is, however, that the real protagonists of Fornigate, almost from the beginning, were the journalists who wrote about it rather than Clinton or the putative bimbos. And no doubt the President was pleased to be able to take a breather from any anxieties he may have had about the allegations against him and watch David Brock and the succession of his own eminent journalistic champions slug it out.

That he was able to do so is to some extent Mr. Brock's own fault. He prefaced his story with an elaborately high-principled rationale for publishing it in spite of its close resemblance to "vulgar tabloid fare" and laboriously built up a case that Clinton's appearances on "60 Minutes" in January of 1992 and subsequently on the "Donahue" show were specifically designed to assure people that his still unspecified marital troubles were behind him and that many of his supporters believed that this was true. Thus his detailing of Clinton's tomcatting in Little Rock *after* January of 1992 was proof that the President had deliberately deceived the American people. (Unfortunately for this contention, the only eyewitness accounts of Clinton's sexual entanglements come from a period before the "60 Minutes" appearance.) Moreover, the collateral allegations of "how Clinton's private activities have caused lies to be told, threats to be made, and cover-ups to be undertaken," mean, according to Mr. Brock, that "an issue of public integrity is raised, and the public's right to know outweighs a public figure's claim to privacy or journalistic discretion."

In a similar vein, William Rempel and Douglas Frantz, the reporters who pursued the story for *The Los Angeles Times*, began by noting "a widening belief that personal character may be as important to a leader's performance as political party or ideology." A widening belief among consumers of news that they have a right to be told everything about the famous, more like. But even if Rempel and Frantz are right about "character," it is too self-serving to bring the matter up here. It sounds like a rationalization for prurience. Let us by all means be prurient (unless we are as noble-spirited as M. Kinsley), but spare us the high-minded claptrap about why prurience is necessary to safeguard the republic. Far better for the muckrakers to be shameless about their muckraking. They ought to have the guts to leave the spatterings of muck on their clothes and outrage the synod of their colleagues by professing to like the smell.

Moreover, I am very far from being convinced that the catch-all term "character" applies equally to public and private behavior. I cannot now remember who it was who said, at the end of a long life, that he had known ten prime ministers of Britain and that nine of them had been adulterers, but the proportions among ambitious and powerful men frequently exposed to temptation sound about right. That the nine private sinners out of ten should also, some of them, be men of honor in the public realm may be hypocritical, but it does not shock me as perhaps it ought to do. It seems to me that the paradox of such hypocrisy explains why the distinction between public and private grew up in the first place—and why it is worth preserving. Alas, once it is as far gone as it now appears to be, what can we ever do to get it back? Probably nothing.

Instead, it seems that we have to make do with nothing more than those Journalistic Standards that the critics of David Brock are able to invoke with so much flexibility and so little conviction. For what they usually neglect to mention is that the nasty, right-wing Brock was not alone in going after this story. His version of it might well have sunk

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with few traces if not for the decision by CNN to broadcast interviews with the two named state troopers on the evening before the *Spectator* hit the newsstands. This, in turn, forced ABC and NBC news both to pick up the story the following evening. CBS, remaining true, perhaps, to the principles by which Dan Rather had earlier in the year aspired to be, together with Connie Chung, "one-hundredth as great" as the President and Mrs. Clinton, declined to mention it.

It was only when the media snowball had grown to this size, two days later, that it was sighted in *The Los Angeles Times*—which had been pursuing the story even before Brock, had worked on it concurrently, and had formed the closer relationship with Cliff Jackson, who was the lawyer for the troopers and the impresario for their tales. Why the L.A. *Times* delayed until after the *Spectator* and CNN had cleared the way and deprived Rempel and Frantz of their scoop is now unlikely to be known—officially. The paper would be equally reluctant to admit to ideological considerations, to pusillanimity, or to doubts about the high standards of reporting in a story it eventually ran.

That public-relations dilemma may have been what led to the bizarre claim by the paper's Washington bureau chief, Jack Nelson, on "Washington Week in Review" that "right-wing journalists" including Fred Barnes of *The New Republic* and Brit Hume of ABC News had engaged in a "conspiracy" to spread a story that he, Nelson, had threatened to resign if the Rempel–Frantz account of the troopers' allegations were published. It remains spectacularly unclear why, in order to refute such a charge, Nelson should have thought it necessary not only *not* to resign but also to accuse a putative "right-wing" caucus of our splendid congress of commentators of maliciously fabricating a story that he had ever *considered*—or pretended to consider—resigning. It seems a classic case of protesting too much, and may lend some credence to the more recent rumor—which Nelson was no doubt too busy to call me to deny—that the delay was due to his having asked for extra time to discredit his own reporters' story.

In any event, in view of Messrs. Barnes and Hume's stout denials that they spread any rumors about Mr. Nelson, the only thing we can be sure of is that there is no limit to which a non-right-wing journalist will not go to defend his reputation for professionalism and—that old favorite—objectivity. In other words, the myth of objectivity, though frequently debunked by the Left (most recently in a book by Stanley Fish whose title is an epitome: *There's No Such Thing as Free Speech . . . and It's a Good Thing, Too*), is in practice often much more cherished on the Left than it is on the Right. David Brock and *The American Spectator* make no bones about their conservative bias, but again and again they are attacked for it by establishment journalists attempting to discredit them with the mere assertion of it—usually in some such formulation as Sidney Blumenthal's about "the small, far-right-wing group of people" who dreamed up Fornigate.

Essential to this mission of character assassination, of course, is the pretense that they themselves are objective and unbiased—an increasingly incredible contention but one which is clung to with the strength of religious belief by those who occupy what may be the world's last imperial parliament: the World Congress of Enlightened and Progressive-minded Journalists. It is time that those on the outside demanded the franchise and forced the E and P-m J frankly to declare themselves a faction and not a one-party state. I suggest that they all be made to read Stanley Fish.

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Books

Ovid transformed

by Sara Mack

A new Age of Ovid seems to have dawned. Publius Ovidius Naso (43 B.C.–A.D. 17) was admired immensely in his own time, as he was in general down through the ages, until the nineteenth century, when, as T. F. Higham put it in 1934, he "died and was buried under mountains of disparaging comment to make a throne for Vergil." Ovid has finally dug himself out from under that mountain, although it has taken him more than fifty years to do it. He is beginning to be rediscovered by ordinary readers (artists never forgot him, as we can see when we look around at the literature, music, painting, and sculpture influenced by him over the centuries).

Signs of the Ovidian renaissance today include his inclusion this year in the Advanced Placement curriculum in secondary-school Latin programs, where he now joins Cicero, Horace, and Virgil, and in a profusion of new translations—at least of the *Metamorphoses*—for those who don't make it through A.P. Latin. Until quite recently Latinless readers who wanted to read the *Metamorphoses* had little to choose from: the only available translations were the Penguin in prose and Rolfe Humphries in blank verse. In the 1980s two more appeared, one in heroic couplets by A. E. Watts, the other in blank verse by A. D. Melville. Allen Mandelbaum's new version of the *Metamorphoses*[1] will be followed in the near future by translations by David Slavitt and by Charles Martin. A feast, indeed.

Professor Mandelbaum's translations are well-known. His *Aeneid*, which received a National Book Award, was probably the standard text in college classrooms until Robert Fitzgerald's translation came along. Mandelbaum uses mostly unrhymed blank verse for his *Metamorphoses*, as he does elsewhere. It is a good choice, as Melville says in his translator's note: "It remains an admirable medium for narrative poetry; its versatility matches the variety of Ovid's verse . . . To match Ovid's style the verse must be taut, swift and sonorous. Given these qualities, the fact that it is also 'blank' need be no blemish." Unfortunately, Allen Mandelbaum's verse is neither taut, swift nor sonorous. In fact, as I think back over translations from past centuries, those by Golding, Sandys, and Dryden, for example, I wonder whether Mandelbaum's would have made it into print at all in any age but ours. Poets and the public deserve better.

The *Metamorphoses* is a very long poem, more than two thousand lines longer than the *Aeneid*. Mandelbaum's translation must be close to half again as long. Ovid is often accused of not knowing when to stop, although I think he generally knows exactly when to stop—for his purposes. I had never thought I would come to see him as a model of concision, however. Reading Mandelbaum's *Metamorphoses* has made me marvel

1 *The Metamorphoses of Ovid: A New Verse Translation*, by Allen Mandelbaum; Harcourt Brace, 559 pages, $40.

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at Ovid's brevity. I find Mandelbaum's pace painfully slow, and when I check his text against the Latin I nearly always find that Ovid's Latin is much tighter, no words wasted at all. It is, I think, impossible to translate Latin into English line for line as Lattimore does with Greek in his *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Humphries probably comes close. But Humphries, while offering us a readable poem, doesn't give us Ovid—he prunes Ovid's luxuriance too drastically. Mandelbaum doesn't give us Ovid either; his Ovid is so heavily padded that he isn't always recognizable as Ovid at all. (As the poet Martial says in another context: when you read my poem badly, it ceases to be mine and starts being yours.) Ovid is infinitely varied, Mandelbaum is endlessly the same. He steamrolls over the dips and rises of Ovid's everchanging landscape, flattening whatever lies in his path.

Perhaps the world's record in expansion by a translator comes in Book XII when Mandelbaum takes seven lines (fifty-one words) to render Ovid's two and a half lines (eighteen words) giving Caenis's response to Neptune, who offered her a present after raping her:

> "And Caenis answered: 'What I have endured
> is so outrageous that I now must choose
> some mighty gift as recompense: a thing
> that will prevent my ever suffering
> such injury again. If you but grant
> that I not be a woman anymore,
> you will have given all that I would ask.'"
>
> *'magnum' Caenis ait 'facit haec iniuria votum,*
> *tale pati iam posse nihil; da, femina ne sim:*
> *omnia praestiteris.'*

("Caenis said, 'great the gift such injury requires: no longer to be able to suffer such a thing: grant that I not be a woman; you'll have taken care of everything.'") What is gained by this padding? nothing that I can see. What is lost? everything.

Elsewhere Mandelbaum manages to limit himself a bit, compressing Ovid's two and a half lines into only six lines of his own:

> she throws herself upon his neck, she prays
> with words and tears, imploring him to stay:
> there is no need for him to join the rest;
> it is enough for him to send out aid—
> and doing so, he can be sure to save
> himself and her: in sum, two lives in one.
>
> *. . . colloque infusa mariti,*
> *mittat ut auxilium sine se, verbisque precatur*
> *et lacrimis, animasque duas ut servet in una.*

(". . . and falling on her husband's neck begs him with words and tears to send aid minus himself and save two lives in one.")

Of course, it is not just the excessive length that is the problem. Each expansion making a long poem just that little bit longer, these tedious elaborations have a deadening effect on the reader and the poem. Mandelbaum can't bear to use a single word where three can do the job. (It is fortunate that he doesn't consistently triple Ovid; the 559-page book, already uncomfortably heavy, would be unliftable.) The single feminine adjective *furibunda* ("distraught" or "frenzied") becomes "incensed, enraged, insane." *Torvis vultibus* ("with fierce looks") becomes "Arachne scowled, abrupt, aggrieved, morose," and *longaque confecta senecta* ("used up by long old age") becomes "too long/ a life has left you anile, stale, undone."

Any but the most casual readers, unless they are so numbed as to stop noticing, will be struck by the many infelicities and peculiarities of Mandelbaum's language. I shall list only a few:

> With his young body Phaethon
> has leaped into the chariot.
>
> serving to efface itself, ripe grain
> provides the fuel
>
> a lethal cold (death)
>
> tintinnabulating gongs
>
> the hero treaded on the heaps
> of dying men

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Though larger now, and with a dark-blue face,
Acis had certainly not been erased.

the sum
of clishmaclaver grows; to tales retold
each teller adds his own fresh furbelow.

your drunkenness
compounds your lust and breeds a brouhaha

when they append
upon his head, between his horns, the ears
of grain.

Locutions of this sort make Ovid sound silly, which he isn't; he is funny, often, urbane and sophisticated, always. Other Mandelbaum renderings of the Latin make Ovid seem careless and illogical. He is neither. When Ovid refers to the curtain going up at the theater on holidays, he knows what he means; Mandelbaum doesn't seem to understand English usage—*he* has the *backdrop* raised; when Ovid has Mars lean on his spear as he climbs into his chariot, Mandelbaum has him use the spear as a lever: "he leaned upon/ his lance as lever; with that added thrust,/ he vaulted into his huge chariot."

Sometimes out-and-out mistranslations combine with peculiar word choices to make nonsense of Ovid's meaning. A good example:

As lilies, poppies, violets,
if loosened as they hang from yellow stems
in a well-watered garden, fade at once
and, with their withered heads grown heavy,
bend . . .

What can loosening flowers as they hang from yellow stems possibly mean? To find out we must go to the Latin where we find that the flowers are broken, not loosened, and that the yellow stems are the stamens of the lilies.

ut, siquis violas riguoque papaver in horto
liliaque infringat fulvis horrentia linguis,
marcida demittant subito caput illa gravatum

("Just as, in a well-watered garden, if someone breaks violets, poppies, or lilies bristling with tawny tongues, they suddenly droop their withered heads.")

The most egregious mistranslation I noted also necessitates a cover up. Mandelbaum translates *pius Anchises* as "pious *Aeneas*," mistaking the father for the son, presumably because Ovid has given Anchises his son's usual Virgilian epithet. According to Mandelbaum, then, Aeneas reminds Anius of a previous visit when he saw Anius and his children. As Mandelbaum should know, Anchises is the traveler in the family (see *Aeneid* III and VIII) and here Ovid is rewriting the Anius episode in *Aeneid* III. Since he exchanged Aeneas for Anchises at the beginning of Anius's speech, Mandelbaum has to correct Ovid at the end as well. He can't translate Anius's reference to Venus's doves "the birds of your wife" because Venus is Aeneas's mother, not his wife, so he rewrites Ovid to read "doves, the birds Anchises' consort, Venus loves." My students would be drawn and quartered for taking such liberties with a text. A major poet deserves much better treatment. Twentieth-century readers deserve much better treatment.

Elsewhere, instead of, or in addition to, mistranslating, Mandelbaum omits some of Ovid's text. It happens several times. Perhaps he thinks the poem is long enough already, perhaps he just doesn't notice. In one case his omission makes for the curious expression, "Dorylas, who wears/ no spear." I never heard of a warrior wearing a spear; "wearing" seems to have crept in from the Latin Mandelbaum has omitted; what Dorylas *was* wearing was a wolf skin, but Mandelbaum doesn't mention it. Perhaps the most unfortunate of Mandelbaum's omissions, for Ovid, is the absence of the two lines in which Daedalus's son Icarus calls on his father as he falls into the Icarian Sea and drowns. Mandelbaum begins by offering a very silly translation of Icarus losing his ability to fly: "As he beats upon the air/ his arms can get no grip; they're

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wingless—bare," "*nudos quatit ille lacertos/ remigioque carens non ullas percipit auras*." ("Naked the arms he beats and, lacking wings he doesn't catch the air.") And he then leaves out the next two lines: "*oraque caerulea patrium clamantia nomen/ excipiuntur aqua, quae nomen traxit ab illo*." ("And the lips shouting the name father are taken by the water that got its name from him.") A major focus of Ovid's story is Daedalus as father *vs.* Daedalus as artist, so Mandelbaum omits an important point and weakens the impact of the next verse which begins, "But the unhappy father, no longer a father, called . . ."

Before I leave the subject of errors in the translation I would like to mention the numerous peculiarities in the spelling of proper names. "Oenus" for Oeneus (sometimes spelled right, sometimes wrong), "Aegus" for Aegeus, and "Caenus" for Caeneus are odd, but at least they are recognizably the same name, so a reader who wanted to find out more about them would probably be able to find them in a mythological dictionary. "Algaeon" for Aegaeon may be a typo, so, perhaps, are "Laomedeon" for Laomedon, "Callirohe" for Callirhoe, and "Eumolphus" for Eumolpus, but "Thaneus" for Thaumas, "Morphus" for Mopsus, "Ramnuntes" for Rhamnus, and "Aumalius" for Amulius are careless mistakes that have no business appearing in a published text.

A final error I cannot understand at all is the statement in the afterword that Augustus became consul for life in 19 B.C. To the contrary, in 23 B.C. Augustus resigned the consulship that he had held regularly since 31; thereafter he only held it twice. The only thing I can connect with 19 B.C. that Mandelbaum might have been vaguely remembering is that no one outside of the imperial family was allowed to have a triumph after that time. It doesn't matter to our reading of the poem whether or not Augustus was consul for life, but I am old-fashioned enough to think that an author should get his facts right, if he chooses to present them.

Perhaps the most distressing feature of Mandelbaum's translation of the *Metamorphoses* is something readers of his earlier translations must know well: his odd phrasing, strange rhymes, extraordinary enjambments, and distracting use of dashes. As D. S. Carne-Ross wrote, in a review of Mandelbaum's translation of the *Odyssey*, "in the art of enjambment, Mandelbaum has few inferiors." We can see what he means if we look at the final words of his *Paradiso*, where, if anywhere, a translator might be expected to strive for sublimity:

> Here force failed my high fantasy; but my
> desire and will were moved already—like
> a wheel revolving uniformly—by
> the Love that moves the sun and the other
> stars.

Mandelbaum was constrained by the format of his *Divine Comedy* to strive for brevity. Unfortunately neither he nor the editors at Harcourt Brace seem to have felt the need of any limits in a translation of the *Metamorposes*. His enjambments continue to be uniquely his, and he is free to indulge his penchant for rhyme without let or hindrance ("without a let," as he puts it himself). Occasionally one of his rhyming sprees works:

> "My *enemy*,
> you can exult: you've triumphed over *me*!
> What triumph? Even in my *misery*,
> I've more than you have in *felicity*:
> despite these deaths, I still claim *victory*!"

These are the words of foolish, arrogant Niobe who had offended the goddess Latona by disparaging the number of her offspring (only two, but those two, unfortunately for Niobe, are Apollo and Diana). Niobe still hasn't caught on, even though Apollo has killed all her sons, and Diana is about to kill all her daughters, as we the readers know, but blind Niobe does not. The multiple rhymes here make a nice ringing triumphant climax to Niobe's speech. It is one of the few places in the text that I

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don't find this sort of rhyme, sometimes coupled with internal rhyme, disturbing. When Apollo tries to win over Daphne while chasing her, he says, according to Mandelbaum:

> Through me, all is revealed: what's yet to *be*,
> what was, and what now is. The *harmony*
> of song and lyre is achieved through *me*.
> My shaft is sure in flight; but then there's *he*
> whose arrow aimed still more *infallibly*,
> the one who wounded *me* when I was *free* . . .

The rhyme, together with the odd phrasing his enjambment imposes, grates on the ear. I suspect that Mandelbaum, rightly perceiving the comedy in the Apollo and Daphne story (at least compared to the ever darker chase and rape stories that follow it), is trying to be funny, but his sense of fun is not Ovid's. Here we recognize the fine Italian hand that gave us "For I did see the beak, did hear it speak" and "as Anna sings hosannas" while translating Dante.

Regrettably, Mandelbaum chooses to blur the end of one of Ovid's most moving stories (that of Ceyx and Alcyone, the devoted couple who are turned into halcyons after he is drowned at sea) and the beginning of the next story (one of Ovid's lighter-weight tales) with heavy rhyme that lessens the pathos of the first tale by merging it with the next:

> An old man, as he watched that pair of birds
> fly over broad expanses of the *sea*,
> was praising Ceyx and *Alcyone*,
> who loved each other so *enduringly*.
> And one who stood nearby—or it may *be*
> the same old man himself—then told this
> *story*:
> "And that bird, too, the one whom you can *see*
> skimming the *sea* . . .

Apparently Mandelbaum has no more ear for poetry than he has concern for the integrity of the text he is translating. If he had, he surely would not have written such verses as:

> . . . She said they were ungrateful *and*
> unworthy of the gift of harvest *she*
> had given them—above all, *Sicily* . . .

or

> But keep him far from pools; and he must *not*
> pluck any flowers from trunks; and any *bush*
> he sees—he must remember this—may *be*
> the body of a goddess.

or

> I seek my wife: she stepped upon a *viper*,
> a snake that shot his venom into *her*
> young body . . .

If we phrase these as prose, ignoring all line endings, they are not so bad. It's only when we read them as verse that we see how unpoetic they are, with their peculiar separation of what belongs together, their strange monosyllabic endings, and their odd rhymes.

Clearly Mandelbaum has no notion that poetry is intended to be read aloud, either. Would anyone who listened to his verses have written: ". . . his forests followed him. The god-of-Delos'/ fair hair was wreathed with laurel of Parnassus" and ". . . The blood he *sees*/ is nothing but the blood that was *Menoetes'*" with their strange treatment of the s-apostrophe at the end of the line? They work, if they work at all, for the eyes, not the ear. And if Mandelbaum thought of verses as poetic units conveying sense, rather than as packages of words, I think we would have been spared hyphenated word jokes like:

> . . . indeed, his father-
> in-law inspired no less pride in Peleus.

Mandelbaum likes this sort of thing; he does it a number of times. Perhaps he intends to imitate Ovid's occasional trick of leading the reader up the garden path. When Ovid does it, he has a narrative purpose, as when he puts the finishing touches on his portrait of Nestor as an unreliable

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narrator by having him make it clear, *after* he has finished his long and boring story about the battle between the Lapiths and the Centaurs, that he has probably been falsifying all along. Mandelbaum seems to be making a little joke for no purpose I can see.

To conclude, I think Mandelbaum has done Ovid a great disservice by translating his witty, elegant, and fascinating poem, and I hope Ovid won't be blamed for what his translator has done. The *Metamorphoses* is a difficult poem to translate; it must be done with a lightness of touch Mandelbaum knows nothing of. If readers can't read Latin, they can enjoy Melville, or they can wait and see what Slavitt and Martin produce. Meanwhile, we must try to keep Mandelbaum's translation out of impressionable hands. It took Ovid a long time to dig himself out from under that mountain of disparaging comment I mentioned at the beginning; I would hate for him to have to start all over again, thanks to one big bad book.

Poisoned Wells

Michael Coren The Invisible Man: The Life and Liberties of H. G. Wells. Atheneum, 240 pages, $22.50

reviewed by Brooke Allen

Michael Coren presents his new biography of H. G. Wells as a myth-shattering study. He had started his researches "with nothing but affection and admiration for the self-made man of so many achievements," but soon discovered such an unpleasant side to his subject's character that the biography perforce became a revisionist one, seeking to prove that Wells was not on the side of the angels, as other biographers had assumed, but had exercised a pernicious influence on twentieth-century thought. One can only conclude that Coren knew shockingly little about his subject when he decided to write his biography, for Wells's less savory characteristics—his proto-fascist Utopianism, his advocacy of eugenics, his anti-Semitism and anti-Catholicism—are right there in his books for anyone to find, especially in *Experiment in Autobiography*, *A Modern Utopia*, *Anticipations*, and *Men Like Gods*.

Considering his revisionist agenda, Coren has given us remarkably little new material on Wells. Nothing one reads here is much of a surprise; most of it is already known to readers of other biographies of Wells, including the autobiography. But Coren has performed a valuable service in looking at Wells's life and work from a new *angle*. A biography (albeit brief) of Wells from a hostile point of view, with plenty of ammunition at the author's disposal, is quite a useful object. It should help us to gain perspective on this large and troubling figure.

Wells proclaimed himself a prophet, and the world, ever credulous, took him at his word. It continued to do so in spite of incontrovertible evidence of an often violent and vindictive nature, and Wells, like Carlyle and D. H. Lawrence, other self-proclaimed prophets, continues to this day to get off lightly. This would of course not be the case had any of these writers enjoyed any real political influence. Though Wells attained the unprecedented privilege of audiences with both Stalin and Roosevelt, he certainly did not influence policy—indeed, his attempt to interest Stalin in Roosevelt's ideas for world-cooperation now appear amazingly naïve, if more admirable than some of his activities.

What are Coren's indictments?

First: Wells took sexual and emotional advantage of women while simultaneously paying lip-service to their fight for equality. It should come as no surprise to readers of biography that even the most admired writers tend to confine their noble sentiments to paper rather than practicing them on their loved ones. Wells was hardly unique in this arena, though his often cruel, often ludicrous behavior with women was far from admirable. But much has already been written about the low farce of Wells's amorous

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adventures, and except for an interesting chapter on Rebecca West—interesting in that it exposes the affair not as the equal and exalted coupling of two free spirits but rather as a cautionary example of just how slavish a role even the most intelligent "New Woman" could voluntarily play—none of this is very germane. For it was Wells's public position rather than his private life that influenced his era, and his public position was an enlightened one. *Ann Veronica* is not one of Wells's better works of fiction, but it was a tremendous gift to young women who wanted more from life than the domestic servitude of a conventional Edwardian marriage.

Second: Wells displayed dangerous fascist leanings in his writings. This is unarguable. Wells read and was influenced by Houston Stewart Chamberlain's *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* (1899), and Wells's *Anticipations* (1901) lays out the blueprint for an undeniably fascist "New Republic," in which certain, supposedly worthier, elements of the population survive and thrive by killing off other, "lower" peoples. Coren points out that Wells was "one of the first writers, and certainly the first popular writer, to include racial engineering in his philosophy." *A Modern Utopia* (1905) proposed dividing earth's population by intelligence and aptitudes into Samurai (the elite ruling class), the intellectual Poietic class, the active Kinetic class, the Dull (manual workers), and the Base (criminals and misfits); the Samurai would seclude the Base "from the great body of the population . . . in remote and solitary regions . . . they will be fenced in and forbidden the common run of men."

Wells, however, was capable of recognizing the vainglory and will to dominate behind actual fascist leaders, and he was at least free of the Great Man theories that have obsessed so many political writers. In the Thirties he wrote that "everywhere there are dictators and 'leaders': everywhere there are 'movements' festering about anything from the highly distended Mussolini to our own little black-head, Mosley. . . . It is the Great Man idea and method in final pathological decay." He always questioned the idea of blind trust in an individual leader ("So long as you suffer any man to call himself your shepherd sooner or later you will find a crook round your ankle") and, in spite of his admiration for Stalin, he was certain that under him Russia would never gain the vitality to realize its Socialist dream. Coren accuses Wells of faulty, pseudo-scientific thinking—an accusation that is often justified—and implies that his much-vaunted scientific education was spotty at best: "crammed, erratic and tipped with a dangerous unpredictability." Be that as it may, it was far more extensive than the scientific formation enjoyed by most other writers—or indeed, political leaders—of the era: the rigid classical ideal behind the British public school education ensured that.

Third: Wells was an anti-Semite. Again, there is no arguing with this, and Coren points out that unlike Chesterton, Belloc, Buchan, and other contemporaries who had expressed anti-Semitic notions, Wells's are mitigated neither by circumstance nor apology. Wells wrote of the "essential parasitism of the Jewish mycelium upon the social and cultural organisms in which it lives," and he never budged from this opinion. No apologies can be made for this cruel and ignorant belief. Wells was also violently anti-Catholic, a prejudice which amounted to paranoia.

Fourth: Wells was no Gentleman. It didn't need Coren to point this out. In fact Wells himself always made a virtue of it, and one of the areas where he was most influential—beneficently so—was in his remarkable writings, especially his novels, about the often hopeless plight of England's lower classes. This may finally prove to be Wells's greatest contribution to literature and even to social thought. *The Time Machine* is a fantasy grounded in outrage at the waste and tragedy of dividing society into superior beings and underground-dwellers; *Love and Mr. Lewisham* and *Experiment in Autobiography* examine the plight of the intelligent man kept at the bottom by overwhelming social and economic forces. "There was no dole behind the 'swapped' shop assistant in those

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days," Wells wrote. "You swam for as long as you could and then, if you could not scramble into some sort of shop, down you went into absolute destitution, the streets and beggary." This was the fate of Leonard Bast in Forster's *Howards End*, and might have been Wells's too had he not managed to escape the cycle through a combination of luck, fecklessness, and self-confidence.

Coren, however, seems to hold Wells's lack of social polish against him, and he quotes, as serious examples of considered "scepticism," mere snobbery like A. L. Rowse's shallow indictment: "Let us dismiss [Wells] first. . . . He was singularly unimpressive on the platform: a dumpy, bright-eyed chirpy little man, with an unregulated wispy moustache, and a pipsqueak of a voice. It was obvious that he was no gentleman, and no proletarian either . . . he was unmistakably lower-middle class."

The ultimate offense! Coren's treatment of Hilaire Belloc's lengthy attack on the *Outline of History*, a public debate in which Wells was finally humiliated, is also somewhat irrelevant. He presents it as a righteous victory for Belloc, rather than the unequal contest in sophism it actually was. Wells was never much of a debater; Belloc, the doughty polemicist, was a former president of the Oxford Union: but Wells, finally, had more right on his side. It is indicative of the weakness of Coren's arguments that he gives the final word in judgment of this dispute to Evelyn Waugh, of all people—hardly the disinterested bystander he should have sought.

Coren's thinking tends to be shallow, his sources poorly recorded, and his original research negligible. But the publication of his book provides a good occasion for reviewing the record on Wells and finally evaluating his life. It is obviously time that Wells-the-Prophet was laid to rest. Coren convincingly reiterates what many already knew: that Wells's politics were dangerous, his Utopias ugly police-states. Wells-the-educator presents a different story. He was a great liberating factor for countless young people in the early part of the century, especially men with limited social and economic possibilities, and women. And as for Wells-the-novelist, it is time he enjoyed a renaissance, or at least a new American edition of his best novels—*Tono-Bungay*, *Love and Mr. Lewisham*, *The Invisible Man*, *The Time Machine*, *Mr. Britling Sees It Through*, and *Kipps*, perhaps his masterpiece.

Through a keyhole

Theresa Whistler
Imagination of the Heart:
The Life of Walter de la Mare.
Duckworth (London), 478 pages, £25

reviewed by Michael Glover

When Walter de la Mare turned eighty in 1953, *The Times* of London described him, in its caption to a large portrait photograph, as this "Genius in our Midst." Forty years on, that genius has largely been forgotten—due, in no small part, to the vicissitudes of fashion. Long overdue, this is the first major biography of an important twentieth-century English poet, anthologist, and short-story writer.

De la Mare was born in the outer suburbs of London in 1873. His family, of French Huguenot descent, was middle-class and relatively impoverished. Poetry was the pole of his spiritual compass from early childhood, but as a young man he had precious little time to devote to his own literary interests. His first employment was as an accounts clerk with Rockefeller's Standard Oil in the City of London, and there he remained, earning a miserable pittance of a living that barely supported his young family, for almost twenty years.

In the 1890s, he played, in dress and demeanor, at being the Nineties aesthete, wearing a foppish cravat and top hat to work. He was already beginning to write stories, though the time available—moments snatched between assignments at work or at the fag end of the very long

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working day—was always too brief. A gentle, private, fastidious, hypochondriacal man of medium height, he was always passionately interested in the psychology of the murderer, and these ghoulish preoccupations found an outlet in many of his earliest attempts at prose fiction.

The poetry was another matter altogether. De la Mare's poetry, like his private self, owed its greatest debt to childhood, his own and the imagined childhoods of others. Like his great friend the short-story writer Katherine Mansfield, he placed great value on the child-self, the marvelous freshness of its perceptions, the windows it seemed capable of opening onto alternative realities. His language, from first to last, showed a penchant for "the brocaded and the arcane," as his biographer puts it. In his pursuit of the truths of visionary worlds, he made no concessions to the twentieth-century fashion (in poetry and much else) for the language of the everyday. The impulses that coaxed him to write—make-believe, dreams, free associations—served as a kind of bridge between childhood and maturity. As for Keats before him, poetry remained for de la Mare something "divine, miraculous and essential."

By the 1920s, literary success had arrived in plenty, and he was living in an atmosphere of crowded sociability. He numbered among his friends and acquaintances some of the most celebrated literary figures of the day—G. K. Chesterton, J. M. Barrie, Thomas Hardy, and Sir Henry Newbolt (the grandfather of de la Mare's biographer). It was Newbolt, a life-long sponsor, who succeeded in gaining him a Civil List pension from the British Government, which enabled him to shuck the greasy harness of Standard Oil once and for all. Hardy thought de la Mare's poem "The Listeners," first published in book form in 1912, one of the finest of the century:

'Is there anybody there?' said the Traveller,
  Knocking on the moonlit door;
And his horse in the silence champed the
    grasses
  Of the forest's ferny floor:
And a bird flew up out of the turret,
  Above the Traveller's head:
And he smote upon the door again a second
    time;
  'Is there anybody there?' he said.
But no one descended to the Traveller;
  No head from the leaf-fringed sill
Leaned over and looked into his grey eyes,
  Where he stood perplexed and still.
But only a host of phantom listeners
  That dwelt in the lone house then
Stood listening in the quiet of the moonlight
  To that voice from the world of men:
Stood thronging the faint moonbeams on the
    dark stair,
  That goes down to the empty hall,
Hearkening in an air stirred and shaken
  By the lonely Traveller's call.
And he felt in his heart their strangeness,
  Their stillness answering his cry,
While his horse moved, cropping the dark
    turf,
  'Neath the starred and leafy sky;
For he suddenly smote on the door, even
  Louder, and lifted his head:—
'Tell them I came, and no one answered,
  That I kept my word,' he said.
Never the least stir made the listeners,
  Though every word he spake
Fell echoing through the shadowiness of the
    still house
  From the one man left awake:
Ay, they heard his foot upon the stirrup,
  And the sound of iron on stone,
And how the silence surged softly backward,
  When the plunging hoofs were gone.

The Listeners and Other Poems was published by Constable in May 1912. It was a small production—a mere 5 ½ inches high, with square red covers—and de la Mare didn't entirely approve of it. It resembles "a provincial Sunday School prize," he said. De la Mare always had difficulty coming to terms with the release of his material into the public domain. Once published, it was beyond revision—and beyond redemption, perhaps. A publisher's acceptance of a manuscript always affected him in the same way: it would be followed by profound feelings of

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unease and lowness. As he wrote in a letter of the time: "I think I must feel something like the little boy who sees the poor rabbit he has petted and fed brought in smoking on a dish. I didn't want them killed & I wanted them much nicer!"

Fortunately, the reviews of the book were very favorable. Edmund Gosse, whose approval was a kind of imprimatur for a young writer, said that he was "charmed with the music and the fancy, and with the delicate, high, pure region of feeling in which your poetry moves."

The Listeners is perhaps the most satisfying of all de la Mare's collections of poetry. The short lyrics seem to nourish one another; the elements of the fanciful—as in Shakespeare's songs—have a warm and humanizing aura. The human itself takes on the patina of strangeness. The experience of the poet's own inner life seems to communicate itself on every page. He had described something similar in a letter of the previous year: "Now and again over one's mind comes the glamour of a kind of visionary world saturating this."

The title poem became so popular an anthology piece that, after a time, de la Mare refused to grant permission for it to be reprinted any longer. It had become a *tour de force*; he wished not to be wholly characterized by a single poem. And he had grown weary of the many requests to explain what it meant. *How* it is said is *what* it means, he would expostulate; or, he would patiently explain that each new encounter with a poem is that particular experience and no other. On one occasion, however, in response to a letter from an old blind friend in Canada, he wrote in surprising detail on the subject:

> As to "The Listeners"—I have frequently been asked to expound its meaning and in reply have usually suggested that the very kind enquirer should keep to any meaning he may himself have been able to find in it. As Lewis Carroll once said, in a letter in connection with something in the Alices, I fancy, "Since words mean more than one means when one

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uses them, I shall be very pleased to accept whatever meanings you may have discovered" in mine, something to that effect. This, I know, is not much better than a getaway. Moreover (quite between ourselves, of course!), I am now a little vague concerning what *was* the intended meaning of those particular lines. Its rudiments, I think, were that the Traveller is a reincarnation revisiting this world beneath the glimpses of the moon, and there asking the same old unanswerable questions of the Listeners—only conceived but never embodied—who forever frequent, it would seem, this earthly existence, but then are even these rudiments definable—from the poem? Every poem, of course, to its last syllable *is* its meaning; to attempt any paraphrase of the poem is in some degree to change that meaning and its effect on the imagination,—and often disastrously. What the poem (or even a letter for that matter) means is inherent in its terms and (however wide their implications may be) that meaning is nothing less and nothing different. In the finest poems the meaning fairly fizzles and rays out in every direction, it is the primal cell capable of infinite subdivision and of innumerable potentialities. It is the expression of a sort of plastic individual truth immerged in beauty: whereas a scrap of science is for the time being a self-contained announcement of what is an ascertained fact—universally provable by those intelligent enough to comprehend it. You can't prove a poem; it proves you.

Well, well, I didn't intend to make such a fuss as all this.

Questions relating to obscurity and elusiveness of meaning are ones that are being posed perpetually by readers of poetry; but the obscurity of a de la Mare is of a wholly other order from the obscurity of an Ezra Pound. In the case of Pound, the poet has deliberately, willfully concealed his sources in order to tantalize the reader; in order to prove that the poet's own intellectual credentials are as far removed from the poor reader's as God's wisdom is from man's. With de la Mare, the elusiveness has nothing to do with unseemly flourishes of recondite learning—it is part and parcel of that aura of mystery that it is the poem's intention to evoke. There is an open-endedness here—but no sense of cultural exclusivity.

Though he traveled far in his imagination, throughout his long life de la Mare lived a relatively sedentary existence in relatively small houses. He disliked—even feared—the notion of Abroad, though he had a great love for the railways, seeing them as a symbol of man's transience, perpetually thrown amongst strangers. Smallness itself intrigued him—in fact, he liked nothing better than to store grains of detail in his notebook for future use. "Nothing much happens outside," he once wrote, "but a good deal inside: more at times than I can manage to get even with." He didn't require sublimity—merely a world seen through a keyhole into a suburban garden. He was a free-thinker, but never outwardly rebellious. And so he continued, steady as one of his beloved steam engines, weaving sinister tales in prose, writing poems of childhood and enchantment, without much perceptible change, from late-Victorian times until the 1950s.

And when, back in 1912, Ezra Pound, tirelessly rambunctious as ever, was urging his fellow writers to "make it new" by throwing off the shackles of the recent past, its arcane language, its outmoded psychologies, Walter de la Mare, that gentle heir to the Romantic tradition, was just coming into his own. They represent two entirely opposing worlds that, somehow, managed to co-exist without violence.

This biography is an unusual one insofar as it has been written by a woman who knew de la Mare and his family very well over a considerable number of years. Unlike the majority of biographies written in our times, it is not the product of two years' research; it has not been dashed off in haste against some importunate publisher's deadline. Theresa Whistler has thought long and hard about her subject. She has stared at him, listened to him, read him, and, above all, reflected upon him—and, in consequence,

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she has produced a work of profound and sympathetic rehabilitation.

Shorter notices

Michael Heyward The Ern Malley Affair.
Introduction by Robert Hughes.
Faber & Faber, 284 pages, $22.95

In October of 1943, the Australian poet and literary editor Max Harris received in the mail a group of poems by Ern Malley, a Melbourne-based poet who had recently died, at age twenty-five, of Graves's disease. The poems had been sent by Ern's sister, Ethel. Thinking he had struck literary gold —Malley's poems were written in the surrealistic style Harris liked and hoped to plant on Australian soil—he published the poems in *Angry Penguins*, his forum for surrealism and anarchism. Harris fancied himself an *enfant terrible*. He once gave a talk on "Surrealism, the Philistines and You," and wrote a poem about the Spanish Civil War, the subtitle of which was "death is non-existent: death is bourgeois."

But Ern Malley was a hoax. James McAuley and Harold Stewart, two poets of a more traditional bent, had written the poems one spring day in 1943 while posted at an army intelligence unit in Melbourne, and had sent them to Harris with Ethel Malley's bogus letter. The hoaxers hoped to take down a notch, not just nascent Australian surrealism, but the twenty-two-year-old Harris, whose ego and credulity knew no bounds. Harris's mission, announced at the age of eighteen, was "to spark a revolution in Australian literature."

The view of Harris's defenders over the years—that the hoax was a deathblow to the Australian avant-garde—is rightly disputed by Michael Heyward, the Australian journalist who wrote *The Ern Malley Affair*. "An avant-garde in Australian poetry," Heyward writes, is "a contradiction in terms." But there is little else Heyward is on target about. He sympathizes more with Harris and the "Surreal boys," as his followers were called, than with the hoaxers. (McAuley later edited the conservative journal *Quadrant* and became one of Australia's best poets. Harris became a bookseller.) Heyward thinks, as Herbert Read did in the mid-1940s, that the Malley poems have merit, and that anyone would have been taken in by them. But Read was a tireless advocate of the avant-garde. Heyward is one too, and this is fine, except that he sometimes indulges in embarrassing critical commentary on the poems. "The sensation of reading a transcription of a life" in Malley's poems, Heyward writes, "is powerful." After the fraud was exposed, even Harris admitted finding "a certain gawkiness" in the poems.

The poems of Ern Malley—"Ernest" because the pranksters were not, and "Malley" as a diminutive of Mallarmé—are fine surrealist parodies, but nothing more: "The elephant motifs contorted on admonitory walls," "the sound track like a trail of saliva," etc. John Ashbery, who reprinted the poems in a 1961 issue of *Locus Solus*, describes how he once gave his creative-writing class at Brooklyn College two poems—one by Malley, the other by Geoffrey Hill—and asked the students to tell him which was the "serious" poem, which the spoof. Half the students thought that the Malley was the "real" poem. Heyward relates this anecdote with relish, but what it proves beyond the stupidity of undergraduates is unclear. The definitive remark in Heyward's book is by Harold Stewart, who wrote in a 1942 review that there "is a fateful facility about . . . semi-surrealist verse . . . any poet of talent could produce a hundred lines of it a week." Amen to that.

—*Robert Richman*

John Updike Brazil.
Knopf, 260 pages, $23

In his admirably venturesome work as a book reviewer, John Updike has proved himself a trustworthy and enthusiastic guide to that lushest of literary continents, The Latin American Novel, where anything can

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happen and the impossible is a commonplace. This is the land of "magic realism," where, as Updike himself has written, "the past—personal, familial, and national—weathers into fabulous shapes in memory without surrendering its fundamental truth" and "fantasy . . . is a higher level of honesty in the rendering of experience." This is the land where, as an instrument for exploring human reality, the psychological novel will not do. What is needed—and here I quote Updike quoting Borges—is "an ideal 'adventure story' that 'does not propose to be a transcription of reality' but is instead 'an artificial object, no part of which lacks justification.' This efficiency is akin to magic, which assumes . . . that 'things act on each other at a distance through a secret sympathy.'" For the Latin American novel, "the 'only possible integrity' is that of 'magic, in which—clear and defined—every detail is an omen and a cause.'"

A couple of years ago, Updike traveled in Brazil, and the joyous, dangerous, sun-stunned world he found there clearly exhilarated him. His visits to Rio and São Paulo and Brasília, and his affection for the literature of Latin America, have prompted him to write, in this his sixteenth novel, his own magic-realist adventure story. *Brazil* is a happy departure for Updike, an improbably successful artistic stretch, comparable in his *oeuvre* only to *The Coup*, his African novel of some fifteen years ago. Like that book, and like, more recently, the James Buchanan chapters of *Memories of the Ford Administration*, it often shows Updike the inveterate looker-up of facts weaving a prodigious book-learning into an elaborate fictional web. *Brazil* is full of Portuguese names for things (one longs, at times, for a glossary) and sharp-focus snapshots of rapidly shifting scenery (one longs, too, for a map); it is full of Brazilian local color, social, political, historical, and botanical. But the book's exotic setting is never a mere pastiche of other writers' travelogues: it is, on every page, a full and original imagining of a place where miracles can occur, of a tropical Albion fit for a New World romance.

Updike's hero here is Tristão, a poor black teen-ager from the Rio slums, a brave and courtly street-thief with a razor in his pocket and an unshakeable faith in his destiny: to transcend utterly his lowly birth. His heroine is Isabel, a pale child of privilege, a beautiful virgin fresh from convent school and eager at last to taste the world. From the hour they meet, their hearts are one, this latter-day Tristan and Iseult: they are meant to sacrifice, to suffer, even to extinguish their former selves for each other—meant, in Tristão's own words, "to make for the world an example of love." He really talks that way, like a figure out of Chrétien de Troyes, and so does his beloved Isabel, but the high style of their dialogue works: it is of a piece with the rest of this chivalric "adventure story," which, following Borges's prescription, "does not propose to be a transcription of reality" but dares to deal in archetypes, portents, and sorcery, in encounters with Evil and hair's-breadth escapes. *Brazil* is a richly patterned metaphysical cliffhanger, and as I am loath to give away even one turn of its twisting plot, I will go no further than to say that it's also a dark, disquieting meditation on what it is to be male and female, black and white, rich and poor, at one with the world and at odds with every man. It is an "artificial object," created as a challenge to the author's own patented brand of middle-way American verisimilitude, and it is bound to be misunderstood by those who expect only one thing from Updike—*Rabbit, Run* re-run and re-run—and are here presented with something entirely else. I found the book thrilling, not only by its own rights, as an action-driven narrative designed to thrill, but also as an instance of a contemporary master, one whom we thought we had figured out long ago, daring to re-invent himself before our jaded eyes.

—*Christopher Carduff*

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Letters

Gardner Jackson

To the Editors:

The November issue of *The New Criterion* has come only belatedly into my hands, but I would like to correct the preposterous portrait of Gardner Jackson in Stephen Koch's article "Lying for the Truth: Münzenberg & the Comintern."

The notion that Pat Jackson was "one of the witting Münzenberg men on the scene" during the Sacco-Vanzetti agitation and that at the direction of Münzenberg and his "most senior operatives" he brought Felix Frankfurter and his wife into the case is as ridiculous as Koch's statement that Jackson came from Wyoming (he came from Colorado) and that he was "lanky" (he was stocky).

Pat Jackson was one of my father's closest friends, and I knew him well from my childhood to his death in 1965. He was a man of generous and impulsive spirit, temperamentally incapable of dissimulation or discipline. For a time (1934-39) his liberal sympathies were exploited by Lee Pressman, who was indeed a Communist operative (though with no Münzenberg connection); but Jackson was never a Stalinist, and he broke with Pressman in 1939-40. Chapter 2 of Murray Kempton's *Part of Our Time*, evidently unknown to Stephen Koch, is the classic account of the Jackson–Pressman relationship.

Much of my own education in anti-Communism came from Pat Jackson. When I worked for OWI in Washington in the first years of the war, he invited me to join a dining group of anti-Communist liberals in government agencies who met regularly for exchange of information. Pat was then covering the labor movement for *PM*, reporting on Communist activity in the unions and combating the Communists and fellow travelers on the *PM* staff. His militant anti-Communism led a band of National Maritime Union thugs to set on him late one night in 1944, beating him unmercifully and blinding him in one eye. After the war Jackson joined the staff of the National Farmers Union; but his success in leading a floor fight for an anti-Communist resolution in the 1946 convention resulted in his dismissal by the Popular Front leadership. When I wrote an article that year for *Life* magazine exposing Communist influence in the liberal community and labor movement, Pat Jackson was a major source.

The Koch article does grave injustice to a brave and generous-hearted American radical.

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.
New York, N.Y.

P.S.: I might add that in the spring of 1933, James Wechsler, a Columbia undergraduate in a youthful Communist phase, was reproved by his brother Herbert, then a law clerk for Justice Stone, and by Herbert's New Deal friends. As Jimmy Wechsler later wrote in his memoir *The Age of Suspicion*, "I remember Gardner Jackson arguing that the fatal flaw of Marxism was its crude materialism and its denial of the independent existence of the human spirit."

Stephen Koch replies:

Professor Schlesinger misinterprets my text even while he corroborates my main argument about

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Gardner Jackson and gives depth to precisely the relation to the Soviet apparatus I describe in my book *Double Lives*, from which "Lying for the Truth" was drawn. In fact, more accurate quotation would have almost entirely dispelled his polemical point, leaving the more interesting material behind.

In the disputed passage, I explicitly add that Jackson "was probably a much-manipulated fellow traveler rather than a fully witting operative." This, I take it, is exactly Professor Schlesinger's own position. We also agree about Jackson's amiability, and I warm to Professor Schlesinger's defense of his friend's humanity. I too speak of Jackson as "a rather appealing personality of the American left," and a "charmer." I do *not* say that Jackson brought the Frankfurters into the Sacco-Vanzetti case "at the direction of Münzenberg," even though during the Sacco-Vanzetti campaign Jackson worked on a daily basis with Sender Garlin, who had been active in Münzenberg enterprises since 1922, and a contact man for the Party underground. I do say that Frankfurter's *Atlantic* article, written partly at Jackson's urging, was seized upon and disseminated worldwide by the Münzenberg propaganda apparatus. (For the details of my evidence, I refer the reader to the notes of *Double Lives*.) How conscious was Jackson of the Comintern's role in the Sacco-Vanzetti agitation? As I clearly say, the evidence, including Jackson's own oral history, suggests he was more rather than less so.

As to Jackson's relation with the most senior Münzenberg operatives, evidence now in the National Archives documents Jackson's intervention with the State Department on behalf of Münzenberg's longtime second-in-command, Louis Gibarti, covering highly illegal activity on Gibarti's part, and doing so in a fashion gravely compromising to Jackson's own status as "innocent."

To be sure, this took place when Jackson was under the influence of Lee Pressmen—which is indeed a well-known episode, and one that also sustains my point. Meanwhile, I had forgotten, if I ever knew, that Gardner Jackson served as a "major source" for Professor Schlesinger's important 1946 *Life* article on precisely this subject. One might ask how Jackson could have served as that source, or lived through the terrible struggle with the Party that Professor Schlesinger and Murray Kempton describe, without a relation to the International along the lines I outline.

Once again Professor Schlesinger's letter seems to me to corroborate and deepen my view of Gardner Jackson. I am grateful to have it on record, and grateful too for the correction of my error about Jackson's home state. It was Colorado, all right.

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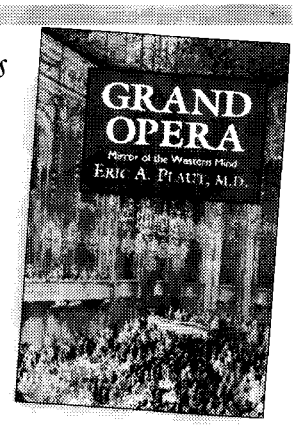

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Transit is a periodical dedicated to East-West-debate. Edited at IWM and published by ***Neue Kritik*** in Frankfurt, it has appeared semiannually in German since 1990. ***Transit*** has become an important component of the intellectual landscape in the German-speaking world. With its wide range of topics and authors - scholars, intellectuals, politicians, writers - ***Transit*** also addresses an international readership.

The sixth issue which has just appeared focuses on **Dilemmas der Sozialpolitik** and **Europas Vergangenheiten**.

Nr. 1: **Übergänge zur Demokratie?** Europa nach 1989
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Issue no. 7 will appear in spring 1994 and address two themes: **Comeback der Geopolitik?** and **Der Mythos vom magischen Prag**.

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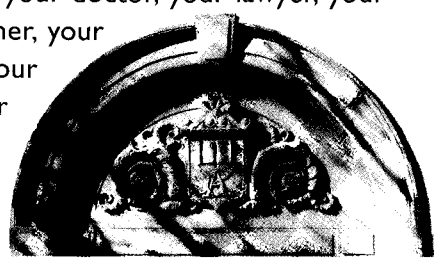

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